

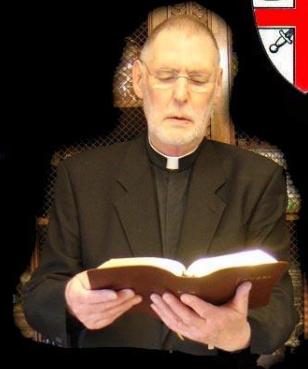


The Berea School of Theology and Ministries on Internet

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**Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.
Psalm 119: 105**



Rev. Philippe L. De Coster, B.Th., D.D.

Evangelical House Churches

Berea Bible Handbook – Part Sixteen

I and 2 Thessalonians / I and 2 Timothy

Research and study by Rev. Philippe L. De Coster, B.Th., D.D.



Ancient Thessalonica – Showing its ruins

Biblical Thessalonica

THESSALONICA was a city and prominent seaport of Macedonia, situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. It was the capital of the "second part " of Macedonia under the Romans, and the residence of the Roman governor. Its original name was Therma, but it was changed by Cassander to Thessalonica in honour of his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great. Its modern name is Saloniki, and it is, next to Constantinople, the most important town of European -Turkey. The Apostle Paul visited the city in A.D. 52, and founded the flourishing church there. His two Epistles to the Thessalonians are addressed to the church at this place. The city has always been very prominent in Eastern affairs. At the time of the Apostle it was quite on a level with Corinth and Athens in its control of the Levantine trade. Its position, at the junction of several important roads with the great Roman highway, the Via Egnatia, which connected Rome with the whole region to the north of the Aegean Sea, made it a valuable centre for the spread of the Gospel. There was also a large Jewish population in Thessalonica, attracted there by the commercial advantages of the city. St. Paul was aware of these advantages, as well as of the necessity of availing himself of them, and the success that crowned his efforts was of the highest importance to this cause in which he laboured.

Good to know that, Thessalonica was located at the intersection of two major Roman roads, one leading from Italy eastward (Ignatia Way) and the other from the Danube to the Aegean. Thessalonica's location and use as a port made it a prominent city. In 168 BC it became the capital of the second district of Macedonia and later it was made the capital and major port of the whole Roman province of Macedonia (146 BC). In 42 BC, after the battle at Philippi, Thessalonica was made a free city. Today the modern city of Thessaloniki is the second most important city of Greece and home to a million inhabitants.

Thessalonica Quotations from the New Testament: (A city of the Macedonia area) -Paul visits Ac 17:1; Phil. 4:16 -People of, persecute Paul Ac 17:5-8,11,13 -Men of, accompany Paul Ac 20:4; 27:2 -Paul writes to Christians in 1Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1 -Demas goes to 2 Ti 4:10

Paul (with Silas and Timothy) came to Thessalonica from Philippi on his second missionary journey, stopping in Amphipolis and Apollonia before arriving here (Acts 17). He preached in the city's synagogue, the chief synagogue of the region, for at least three weeks. His ministry was strong, and he established a Jewish-Gentile church, although it was more heavily Gentile (1 Thess 1:9). When Paul faced great persecution at the hands of the mob, he fled to Berea, but Thessalonians eventually forced him to leave there also (Acts 17:13-14).



Thessalonica (modern Thessaloniki also called Salonika) is located 187 mi. [300 km.] north of Athens ("as the crow flies"). In the days of the apostle Paul it was the capital of the province of Macedonia and was a "free city." Paul visited the city on his second and third missionary journeys and wrote at least two letters to the church here.

Today Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece (750,000) and most of the remains from the New Testament era are either destroyed or covered over by the modern city. However, recently excavations in the center of the city have revealed the remains of an ancient forum (agora).

In ancient times Thessalonica was about the midpoint of the Via Egnatia – the famous Roman Road that ran for 493 mi. [790 km.] from Dyrrhachium and Apollonia on the Adriatic Sea eastward to Kypsela that is located east of the Hebrus River.

Ancient Thessalonica History

Thessalonica rapidly became populous and wealthy. In the war between Perseus and the Romans it appears as the headquarters of the Macedonian navy (Livy xliv. 10) and when, after the battle of Pydna (168 B.C.), the Romans divided the conquered territory into four districts, it became the capital of the second of these (Livy xlv.29), while later, after the organization of the single Roman

province of Macedonia in 146 B.C., it was the seat of the governor and thus practically the capital of the whole province. In 58 B.C. Cicero spent the greater part of his exile there, at the house of the quaestor Plancius (Pro Plancio 41, 99; Epistle Ad Att, iii.8-21). In the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Thessalonica took the senatorial side and formed one of Pompey's chief bases (49-48 B.C.), but in the final struggle of the republic, six years later, it proved loyal to Antony and Octavian, and was rewarded by receiving the status and privileges of a "free city" (Pliny, NH, iv.36). Strabo, writing in the reign of Augustus, speaks of it as the most populous town in Macedonia and the metropolis of the province (vii.323, 330), and about the same time the poet Antipater, himself a native of Thessalonica, refers to the city as "mother of all Macedon" (Jacobs, Anthol. Graec., II, p. 98, number 14); in the 2nd century of our era Lucian mentions it as the greatest city of Macedonia (Asinus, 46). It was important, not only as a harbour with a large import and export trade, but also as the principal station on the great Via Egnatia, the highway from the Adriatic to the Hellespont.

1. Paul's Visit:

Paul visited the town, together with Silas and Timothy, on his 2nd missionary journey. He had been at Philippi, and travelled thence by the Egnatian Road, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia on the way (Acts 17:1). He found at Thessalonica a synagogue of the Jews, in which for three successive Sabbaths he preached the gospel, basing his message upon the types and prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:2, 3). Some of the Jews became converts and a considerable number of proselytes and Greeks, together with many women of high social standing (Acts 17:4). Among these converts were in all probability Aristarchus and Secundus, natives of Thessalonica, whom we afterward find accompanying Paul to Asia at the close of his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20:4). The former of them was, indeed, one of the apostle's most constant companions; we find him with Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:29) and on his journey to Rome (Acts 27:2), while in two of his Epistles, written during his captivity, Paul refers to Aristarchus as still with him, his fellow-prisoner (Colossians 4:10 Philemon 1:24). Gaius, too, who is mentioned in conjunction with Aristarchus, may have been a Thessalonian (Acts 19:29). How long Paul remained at Thessalonica on his 1st visit we cannot precisely determine; certainly we are not to regard his stay there as confined to three weeks, and Ramsay suggests that it probably extended from December, 50 A.D., to May, 51 A.D. (St. Paul the Traveller, 228). In any case, we learn that the Philippians sent him assistance on two occasions during the time which he spent there (Philippians 4:16), although he was "working night and day" to maintain himself (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). Paul, the great missionary strategist, must have seen that

from no other centre could Macedonia be permeated with the gospel so effectively as from Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

But his success roused the jealousy of the Jews, who raised a commotion among the dregs of the city populace (Acts 17:5). An attack was made on the house of Jason, with whom the evangelists were lodging, and when these were not found Jason himself and some of the other converts were dragged before the magistrates and accused of harbouring men who had caused tumult throughout the Roman world, who maintained the existence of another king, Jesus, and acted in defiance of the imperial decrees. The magistrates were duly alive to the seriousness of the accusation, but, since no evidence was forthcoming of illegal practices on the part of Jason or the other Christians, they released them on security (Acts 17:5-9). Foreseeing further trouble if Paul should continue his work in the town, the converts sent Paul and Silas (and possibly Timothy also) by night to Berea, which lay off the main road and is referred to by Cicero as an out-of-the-way town (*oppidum devium*: in *Pisonem* 36). The Berean Jews showed a greater readiness to examine the new teaching than those of Thessalonica, and the work of the apostle was more fruitful there, both among Jews and among Greeks (Acts 17:10-13). But the news of this success reached the Thessalonian Jews and inflamed their hostility afresh. Going to Berea, they raised a tumult there also, and made it necessary for Paul to leave the town and go to Athens (Acts 17:14, 15).

Several points in this account are noteworthy as illustrating the strict accuracy of the narrative of the Acts. Philippi was a Roman town, military rather than commercial; hence, we find but few Jews there and no synagogue; the magistrates bear the title of praetors (Acts 16:20, 22, 35, 36, 38 the Revised Version margin) and are attended by lictors (Acts 16:35, 38 the Revised Version margin); Paul and Silas are charged with the introduction of customs which Romans may not observe (Acts 16:21); they are beaten with rods (Acts 16:22) and appeal to their privileges as Roman citizens (16:37, 38). At Thessalonica all is changed. We are here in a Greek commercial city and a seaport, a "free city," moreover, enjoying a certain amount of autonomy and its own constitution. Here we find a large number of resident Jews and a synagogue. The charge against Paul is that of trying to replace Caesar by another king; the rioters wish to bring him before "the people," i.e. the popular assembly characteristic of Greek states, and the magistrates of the city bear the Greek name of politarchs (Acts 17:5-9). This title occurs nowhere in Greek literature, but its correctness is proved beyond possibility of question by its occurrence in a number of inscriptions of this period, which have come to light in Thessalonica and the neighborhood, and will be found collected in AJT (1898, 598) and in M. G. Dimitzas, (Makedonia), 422;. Among them the most famous is the inscription engraved on the arch

which stood at the western end of the main street of Salonica and was called the Vardar Gate. The arch itself, which was perhaps erected to commemorate the victory of Philippi, though some authorities assign it to a later date, has been removed, and the inscription is now in the British Museum (CIG, 1967; Leake, Northern Greece, III, 236; Le Bas, Voyage archeologique, number 1357; Vaux, Trans. Royal Soc. Lit., VIII, 528). This proves that the politarchs were six in number, and it is a curious coincidence that in it occur the names Sosipater, Gaius and Secundus, which are borne by three Macedonian converts, of whom the first two were probably Thessalonians, the last certainly.

2. The Thessalonian as Church:

The Thessalonian church was a strong and flourishing one, composed of Gentiles rather than of Jews, if we may judge from the tone of the two Epistles addressed to its members, the absence of quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament, and the phrase "Ye turned unto God from idols" (1 Thessalonians 1:9; compare also 2:14). These, by common consent the earliest of Paul's Epistles, show us that the apostle was eager to revisit Thessalonica very soon after his enforced departure: "once and again" the desire to return was strong in him, but "Satan hindered" him (1 Thessalonians 2:18) -a reference probably to the danger and loss in which such a step would involve Jason and the other leading converts. But though himself prevented from continuing his work at Thessalonica, he sent Timothy from Athens to visit the church and confirm the faith of the Christians amid their hardships and persecutions (1 Thessalonians 3:2-10). The favourable report brought back by Timothy was a great comfort to Paul, and at the same time intensified his longing to see his converts again (1 Thessalonians 3:10, 11). This desire was to be fulfilled more than once. Almost certainly Paul returned there on his 3rd missionary journey, both on his way to Greece (Acts 20:1) and again while he was going thence to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3); it is on this latter occasion that we hear of Aristarchus and Secundus accompanying him (Acts 20:4). Probably Paul was again in Thessalonica after his first imprisonment. From the Epistle to the Philippians (Acts 1:26; Acts 2:24), written during his captivity, we learn that his intention was to revisit Philippi if possible, and 1 Timothy 1:3 records a subsequent journey to Macedonia, in the course of which the apostle may well have made a longer or shorter stay at Thessalonica. The only other mention of the town in the New Testament occurs in 2 Timothy 4:10, where Paul writes that Demas has forsaken him and has gone there. Whether Demas was a Thessalonian, as some have supposed, cannot be determined.

3. Later History:

For centuries the city remained one of the chief strongholds of Christianity, and it won for itself the title of "the Orthodox City," not only by the tenacity and vigour of its resistance to the successive attacks of various barbarous races, but also by being largely responsible for their conversion to Christianity.

From the middle of the 3rd century A.D. it was entitled "metropolis and colony," and when Diocletian (284-305) divided Macedonia into two provinces, Thessalonica was chosen as the capital of the first of these. It was also the scene in 390 A.D. of the famous massacre ordered by Theodosius the Great, for which Ambrose excluded that emperor for some months from the cathedral at Milan. In 253 the Goths had made a vain attempt to capture the city, and again in 479 Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, found it so strong and well prepared that he did not venture to attack it. From the 6th to the 9th century it was engaged in repeated struggles against Avars, Slavonians and Bulgarians, whose attacks it repelled with the utmost difficulty. Finally, in 904 A.D. it was captured by the Saracens, who, after slaughtering a great number of the inhabitants and burning a considerable portion of the city, sailed away carrying with them 22,000 captives, young men, women and children. In 1185, when the famous scholar Eustathius was bishop, the Normans under Tancred stormed the city, and once more a general massacre took place. In 1204 Thessalonica became the center of a Latin kingdom under Boniface, marquis of Monferrat, and for over two centuries it passed from hand to hand, now ruled by Latins now by Greeks, until in 1430 it fell before the sultan Amurath II. After that time it remained in the possession of the Turks, and it was, indeed, the chief European city of their dominions, with the exception of Constantinople, until it was recaptured by the Greeks in the Balkan war of 1912. Its population includes some 32,000 Turks, 47,000 Jews (mostly the descendants of refugees from Spain) and 16,000 Greeks and other Europeans. The city is rich in examples of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture and art, and possesses, in addition to a large number of mosques, 12 churches and 25 synagogues.

Quotations from Bible Dictionaries

Thessalonica in Easton's Bible Dictionary

A large and populous city on the Thermaic bay. It was the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia, and was ruled by a praetor. It was named after Thessalonica, the wife of Cassander, who built the city. She was so called by her father, Philip, because he first heard of her birth on the day of his gaining

a victory over the Thessalians. On his second missionary journey, Paul preached in the synagogue here, the chief synagogue of the Jews in that part of Macedonia, and laid the foundations of a church (Acts 17:1-4; 1 Thes. 1:9). The violence of the Jews drove him from the city, when he fled to Berea (Acts 17:5-10). The "rulers of the city" before whom the Jews "drew Jason," with whom Paul and Silas lodged, are in the original called *politarchai*, an unusual word, which was found, however, inscribed on an arch in Thessalonica. This discovery confirms the accuracy of the historian. Paul visited the church here on a subsequent occasion (20:1-3). This city long retained its importance. It is the most important town of European Turkey, under the name of Saloniki, with a mixed population of about 85,000.

Thessalonica in Fausset's Bible Dictionary

A town of Macedonia on the Thermaic gulf, now the gulf of Saloniki. Therma was its original name, which Cassander changed into Thessalonica in honour of his wife, Philip's daughter. It rises from the end of the basin at the head of the gulf up the declivity behind, presenting a striking appearance from the sea. After the battle of Pydna Thessalonica fell under Rome and was made capital of the second region of Macedonia. Afterward, when the four regions or governments were united in one province, Thessalonica became virtually the metropolis. Situated on the Via Ignatia which traversed the S. coast of Macedonia and Thrace, connecting thereby those regions with Rome, Thessalonica, with its harbour on the other hand connecting it commercially with Asia Minor, naturally took the leading place among the cities in that quarter. Paul was on the Via Ignatia at Neapolis and Philippi, Amphipolis and Apollonia (Acts 16:11-40; Acts 17:1), as well as at Thessalonica. The population of Saloniki is even now 60,000, of whom 10,000 are Jews. Trade in all ages attracted the latter to Thessalonica, and their synagogue here was the starting point of Paul's evangelizing. Octavius Augustus rewarded its adhesion to his cause in the second civil war by making it "a free city" with a popular assembly ("the people") and "rulers of the city" (*politarchs*: Acts 17:1; Acts 17:5; Acts 17:8); this political term is to be read still on an arch spanning the main street, from it we learn there were seven *politarchs*. Its commercial intercourse with the inland plains of Macedonia on the N., and on the S. with Greece by sea, adapted it admirably as a centre from whence the gospel word "sounded out not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place" (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Paul visited T. on his second missionary tour. frontPAUL and JASON on this visit.) Other Thessalonian Christians were Demas perhaps, Gaius (Acts 19:29), Secundus, and Aristarchus (Acts 20:4; Acts 27:2; Acts 19:29). On the same night that the Jewish assault on Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas his guests took place, the latter two set out for Berea. Again Paul visited Thessalonica (Acts 20:1-3),

probably also after his first imprisonment at Rome (1 Timothy 1:3, in accordance with his hope, Philemon 1:25-26; Philemon 2:24). Thessalonica was the mainstay of Eastern Christianity in the Gothic invasion in the third century. To Thessalonica the Slavs and the Bulgarians owed their conversion; from whence it was called "the orthodox city." It was taken by the Saracens in 904 A.D., by the Crusaders in 1185 A.D., and by the Turks in 1430; and the murder of the foreign consuls in 1876 had much to do with the last war of 1876-1877, between Russia and Turkey. Eustathius, the critic of the 12th century, belonged to Thessalonica. The main street still standing is the old Via Ignatia, running E. and W., as is shown by the two arches which span it, one at the E. the other at the W. end; on that at the E. end are figures in low relief representing the triumphs of a Roman emperor.

Thessalonica in Smiths Bible Dictionary

The original name of this city was Therma; and that part of the Macedonian shore on which it was situated retained through the Roman period the designation of the Thermaic Gulf. Cassander the son of Antipater rebuilt and enlarged Therma, and named it after his wife Thessalonica, the sister of Alexander the Great. The name ever since, under various slight modifications, has been continuous, and the city itself has never ceased to be eminent. Saloniki is still the most important town of European Turkey, next after Constantinople. Strabo in the first century speaks of Thessalonica as the most populous city in Macedonia. Visit of Paul. --St. Paul visited Thessalonica (with Silas and Timothy) during his second missionary journey, and introduced Christianity there. The first scene of the apostle's work at Thessalonica was the synagogue. Ac 17:2,3 It is stated that the ministrations among the Jews continued for three weeks. ver. 2. Not that we are obliged to limit to this time the whole stay of the apostle at Thessalonica. A flourishing church was certainly formed there; and the epistles show that its elements were more Gentile than Jewish. [For persecution and further history see PAUL] Circumstances which led Paul to Thessalonica. --Three circumstances must here be mentioned which illustrate in an important manner this visit and this journey as well as the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. 1. This was the chief station on the great Roman road called the Via Egnatia, which connected Rome with the whole region to the north of the Aegean Sea. 2. Placed as if was on this great road, and in connection with other important Roman ways. Thessalonica was an invaluable centre for the spread of the gospel. In fact it was nearly if not quite on a level with Corinth and Ephesus in its share of the commerce of the Levant. 3. The circumstance noted in Ac 17:1 that here was the synagogue of the Jews in this part of Macedonia, had evidently much to do with the apostle's plans, and also doubtless with his success. Trade would inevitably bring Jews to Thessalonica; and it is remarkable

that they have ever since had a prominent place in the annals of the city. Later ecclesiastical history. --During several centuries this city was the bulwark not simply of the later Greek empire, but of Oriental Christendom, and was largely instrumental in the conversion of the Slavonians and Bulgarians. Thus it received the designation of "the orthodox city;" and its struggles are very prominent in the writings of the Byzantine historians.

Thessalonica in the Bible Encyclopedia - ISBE

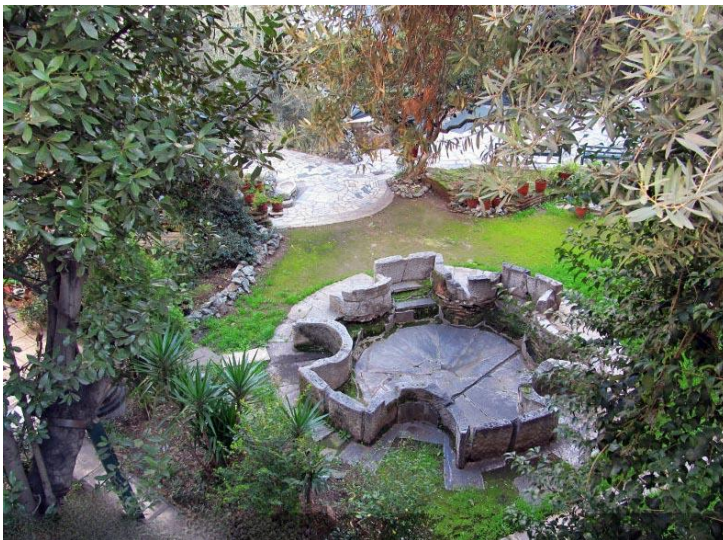
thes-a-lo-ni'-ka (Thessalonike, ethnic Thessalonikeus): 1. Position and Name: One of the chief towns of Macedonia from Hellenistic times down to the present day. It lies in 40 degrees 40 minutes North latitude, and 22 degrees 50 minutes East longitude, at the northernmost point of the Thermaic Gulf (Gulf of Salonica), a short distance to the East of the mouth of the Axios (Vardar). It is usually maintained that the earlier name of Thessalonica was Therma or Therme, a town mentioned both by Herodotus (vii.121 ff, 179 ff) and by Thucydides (i.61; ii.29), but that its chief importance dates from about 315 BC, when the Macedonian king Cassander, son of Antipater, enlarged and strengthened it by concentrating there the population of a number of neighboring towns and villages, and renamed it after his wife Thessalonica, daughter of Philip II and step-sister of Alexander the Great. This name, usually shortened since medieval times into Salonica or Saloniki, it has retained down to the present. Pliny, however, speaks of Therma as still existing side by side with Thessalonica (NH, iv.36), and it is possible that the latter was an altogether new foundation, which took from Therma a portion of its inhabitants and replaced it as the most important city on the Gulf. 2. History: Thessalonica rapidly became populous and wealthy. In the war between Perseus and the Romans it appears as the headquarters of the Macedonian navy (Livy xlv. 10) and when, after the battle of Pydna (168 BC), the Romans divided the conquered territory into four districts, it became the capital of the second of these (Livy xlv.29), while later, after the organization of the single Roman province of Macedonia in 146 BC, it was the seat of the governor and thus practically the capital of the whole province. In 58 BC Cicero spent the greater part of his exile there, at the house of the quaestor Plancius (Pro Plancio 41, 99; Epistle Ad Att, iii.8-21). In the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Thessalonica took the senatorial side and formed one of Pompey's chief bases (49-48 BC), but in the final struggle of the republic, six years later, it proved loyal to Antony and Octavian, and was rewarded by receiving the status and privileges of a "free city" (Pliny, NH, iv.36). Strabo, writing in the reign of Augustus, speaks of it as the most populous town in Macedonia and the metropolis of the province...

Thessalonica, a City full of Secrets



Old St John the Baptist monastery in Thessalonika

Catacombs at St. John – Ancient Monastery



Right next to the temple of “Agia Sophia” just before the popular “Iktinou” str. you will find a very interesting place that remains hidden despite being in one of the most crowded areas of Thessaloniki. It’s all about a small green oasis in the Centre of the city that pleasantly surprises most visitors as it is located nearly 5 meters below the street level and hosts the ancient

monastery and the catacombs of Saint John.

Simply by entering the space you will immediately feel like going back in time because of the several ancient artifacts, while inside the temple the stairs will lead you even deeper, into the ancient catacombs where the history of the place unfolds! Before being used by the first Christians as a religious sanctuary it is believed that the tunnels were part of an extended aqueduct system built by the Romans... But this is not where the story ends! Many archaeological evidences found all around suggest an even earlier use as a pagan temple devoted to ancient deities.

Catacombs and Ancient Tunnels



Thessalonica – Ancient tunnel

According to several stories heard by the elder locals and researches that followed, it is possible that these catacombs and their connected underground tunnels is only a small part of the extensive subterranean network of tunnels that lies beneath the city for centuries! Having religious or even defensive importance like the ones located in the Byzantine Walls area, it is highly possible that some of them could actually lead to several significant monuments and buildings of Thessaloniki dated back to its Ottoman, Byzantine or Ancient period of history.

Many of these have been destroyed during the last decades or remain forgotten beneath the surface, while others have been found, properly excavated and restored like the “Crypt” of Agios Dimitrios or the “Cryptoporticus” corridor inside the Roman Forum.

Underground Crypt



The Crypt of Saint John Baptist in Thessalonica

The underground site of the Crypt is definitely one of the most interesting and impressive archaeological areas of Thessaloniki! According to the Christian Tradition, St. Dimitrios was imprisoned here and died in 303 A.D. It is a well-preserved and restored ancient construction that surprises most visitors because of its implosives atmosphere and exhibits.

It remained lost and unknown for many centuries until it was re-surfaced after the destructive fire that devastated the city centre in 1917. The entrance is located inside the temple, on the East side of the building right next to the “Templon”.

After your visit to the Crypt, the Catacombs or other similar places you will soon realize that Thessaloniki holds way too many secrets that still wait to be revealed....along with countless myths and legends, every corner of this city has its own story to tell.

Thessalonians 1 and 2

Thessalonians 1 - Introduction

Although these letters belong chronologically to Paul's stay in Corinth about the end of A.D. 51, they are considered here because of their relation to the church. They were written within a few months of each other while Paul was engaged in the ministry in Achaia. The first letter was written on the receipt of the report that Timothy brought back to Corinth, and it included his name and that of Silas in its greeting. Its content is generally twofold: praise for the steadfastness of the Thessalonians under persecution by the Jews and the correction of certain errors and misunderstandings that had grown up among them. The main doctrinal theme concerned the return of Christ, a topic that is scarcely mentioned in Galatians unless it appears in Paul's allusion to waiting for the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5). It was no novelty in apostolic preaching, for Peter intimated that Jesus Christ had been received into the heavens until the time of restoration of all things spoken by the prophets (Acts 3:21), and Paul himself in his speech in Athens said that Christ would be the judge of the world (17:31). James, too, had spoken of the coming of the Lord (Jas. 5:7-8). The Thessalonian epistles, however, contain the earliest full discussion of this truth in Christian literature.

The problems in this epistle are quite different from those mentioned in Galatians. In general they reflect the problems of Gentile converts, not those of Jewish believers. The questions of fornication and of idleness were much less likely to appear in a Jewish community because the law, which was instilled into Jewish children from their earliest years, settled these questions in advance. The Gentiles had no such background. Sexual relations were governed chiefly by pleasure and convenience; and although the pagan moralists set certain limits on license, they did not speak with an authoritative "Thus saith the Lord." The social solidarity that the Jew possessed because of his family and his loyalty to the commonwealth of Israel did not characterize the Gentile converts, who by their very conversion had been cut loose from such social bonds as paganism had to offer. To create a sense of brotherhood and mutual responsibility the Thessalonians were commanded to labor industriously and to behave discreetly "toward them that are without" (I Thess. 4:12).

The teaching on the Lord's coming was not entirely new, for Paul spoke later of having taught these things while he was with them (II Thess. 2:5). He may have known some of the teachings of Christ on this subject, for he says, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord" (I Thess. 4:15), and he used the figure of the thief in the night (5:4), which Jesus used for the same teaching (Matt. 24:43;

Luke 12:39-40). The first part of the discussion concerning the translation of the living and the resurrection of the dead (I Thess. 4:13-18) was evidently prompted by the concern of the Thessalonians for those who had died. They believed that the Lord would come, but what would happen to those who died before he came ? The second part of the discussion (5:1-11) was evoked by the desire to know when Christ would return. Paul replied that the answer lay in spiritual consciousness rather than in speculative calculation. If they were alert and active, waiting eagerly for the return of Christ, they would be preserved from wrath and would not need to fear.

Specifications

AUTHOR: The apostle Paul, joined in his salutation by Silvanus and Timothy (1:1), and with specific mention of his name again later in the epistle (2:18). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Irenaeus (200 A.D.).

THE CITY OF THESSALONICA: It was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia. Located on the Egnatian Way, a major road from Rome to the eastern provinces, the city served as center of trade and commerce. Today, it is known as Thessaloniki, or Salonica.

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA: The establishment of the church is recorded in Ac 17:1-9. On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) had just left Philippi and passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia to arrive at Thessalonica. As was his custom, Paul immediately located the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbaths concerning Jesus Christ. While some of them were persuaded, including a great number of devout Greeks and leading women, the unbelieving Jews became jealous and created an uproar in the city. Therefore it became necessary to send Paul and Silas away secretly by night to Berea.

Despite such ominous beginnings, a strong church was established in Thessalonica (cf. 1:2-10). Mostly Gentile (cf. 1:9), its members included Jason (Ac 17:9), Aristarchus, and Secundus (Ac 20:4).

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING: First Thessalonians is considered one of Paul's earliest epistles, if not the first. From the letter itself (3:1-6), and the record of Paul's travels in Acts (Ac 17:10-18:11), it appears that Paul wrote this letter soon after arriving in Corinth on his second journey. This would put it somewhere around 52 A.D.

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE: The abrupt departure from Thessalonica so soon after the beginning of the church naturally left Paul anxious about the condition of the brethren. When Timothy joined Paul at Athens (cf. **Ac 17:14-16**), his concern prompted Paul to send Timothy at once back to Thessalonica to encourage and ground the new disciples in the faith, and to learn how they were enduring persecution (cf. **3:1-5**).

When Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth (cf. **Ac 18:5**), the news was mostly encouraging (cf. **3:6-7**). Despite persecution they had remained strong (**2:13-16**), and even proved themselves to be an example to others (**1:6-8**). Yet, as with any young church, they needed further instruction concerning holy living (cf. **4:1-12**). They also needed to be reassured that their loved ones who died in Christ would not miss out on the blessings involving the coming of our Lord (cf. **4:13-18**). Therefore we can summarize by saying that Paul's purpose in writing was:

*** To praise them for their steadfastness under persecution**

*** To instruct them concerning holy living**

*** To correct any misunderstanding, especially about the second coming of Christ**

THEME OF THE EPISTLE: This book is unique in that every chapter ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ (**1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23**). With his emphasis on steadfastness and holy living, an appropriate theme might be:

"HOLINESS IN VIEW OF THE COMING OF CHRIST"

KEY VERSES: 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

OUTLINE:

INTRODUCTION (1:1-4)

1. Salutation (**1**)
2. Thanksgiving for their faith, hope, and love (**2-4**)

I. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS (1:5-3:13)

A. REGARDING THEIR CONDITION (1:5-10)

1. Their reception of the gospel (1:5-7)
2. Their reputation in every place (1:8-10)

B. REGARDING HIS CONDUCT (2:1-12)

1. The manner of his preaching (2:1-8)
2. The manner of his life (2:9-12)

C. REGARDING HIS CONCERN (2:13-3:13)

1. For their faithfulness (2:13-3:10)
2. For their continued growth (3:11-13)

II. APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTIONS (4:1-5:28)

A. WALK IN HOLINESS (4:1-8)

1. To please God (4:1-2)
2. To abstain from sexual immorality (4:3-8)

B. WALK IN LOVE (4:9-10)

1. As they are taught by God to love one another (4:9)
2. To increase more and more (4:10)

C. WALK IN DILIGENCE (4:11-12)

1. To work with their hands (4:11)
2. To walk properly toward those who are outside (4:12)

D. WALK IN HOPE (4:13-18)

1. With no sorrow concerning those who have died (4:13-14)
2. For we will be rejoined with them when Christ returns (4:15-18)

E. WALK IN LIGHT (5:1-11)

1. For the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (5:1-4)
2. For we are sons of light and sons of the day (5:5-8)
3. For God has appointed us to salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:9-11)

F. WALK IN OBEDIENCE (5:12-22)

1. With respect toward those over us (5:12-13)
2. With concern for one another (5:14-15)
3. With joy, prayer and thanksgiving (5:16-18)
4. Do not quench the Spirit or despise prophecies, but don't be gullible either (5:19-22)

CONCLUDING REMARKS (5:23-28)

1. A prayer for their sanctification and preservation (5:23-24)
2. A request for prayer in his behalf (5:25)
3. A charge to greet one another with a holy kiss, and to read the Epistle to others (5:26-27)
4. A benediction of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ (5:28)

2 Thessalonians – Preface

The second epistle to the Thessalonians was written to remove the misapprehension that "the day of the Lord is just at hand" (II Thess. 2:2). Perhaps the vehemence with which Paul preached the doctrine had led to a misunderstanding of his preaching or of the allusions contained in his first letter. It may be that they had received some teaching from a spurious source, for he urged them not to be "quickly shaken from your mind . . . either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle *as from us*" (2:2, italics ours), which may mean that he was repudiating some teaching falsely attributed to him by others. In any case, he undertook to provide them definite criteria by which they might recognize the approach of "the day of the Lord."

Unfortunately the criteria, which were clear to Paul and to the Thessalonians, are not so easily understandable today. The veiled reference to the "hinderer" (2:6-7) is difficult to interpret. Apparently three major events will presage the Lord's coming: (1) a sudden acceleration of apostasy from godliness (2:3), (2) the removal of some restraining influence (2:6-7), and (3) the complete unveiling of the incarnation of evil who will be animated by Satan and who will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God (2:4, 9). Nowhere else in the Pauline epistles does this particular aspect of eschatological teaching occur. It was, however, an integral part of Paul's current instruction, and he preached it in the churches. The passage indicates that the mystery of lawlessness and the mystery of Christ develop concurrently in the world, and that ultimately there will be an inevitable clash in which Christ must and will triumph. The triumph itself will be his personal return to earth to destroy the antichrist and to reward his saints.

The exhortation of the third chapter is an expansion of the charge given in I Thessalonians to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands" (I Thess. 4:11). Some of the Thessalonians had become so enamored of the idea that the Lord's coming could release them from the evils and tensions of the world that they had given up working and were waiting for the appearance of the Deliverer. They were out of step with the rest of the church and were dependent on others for their support (II Thess. 3:6-11). Paul urged them to earn their own living and to mind their own business.

First and Second Thessalonians are among the first of Paul's writings. They testify to the fact that the message Paul preached was no novelty, but that it had already been a settled body of faith for some time. Paul's reference to his preaching among them (II Thess. 2:15) the same things that he wrote in his letter shows that he had a well-defined system of belief, and his use of the word "tradition" (2:15; 3:6) corroborates this impression. For Paul "tradition" did not mean a loosely transmitted rumour of doubtful authenticity. It meant rather a body of instruction that may have been oral, but was carefully preserved and exactly formulated. He used the cognate verb in describing his transmission of the facts of the life of Christ, which for him constituted the gospel (I Cor. 15:3: *delivered*), and Luke used the same verb to describe the narration of the facts of the life of Christ by eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2). The "tradition" must have included ethical precepts, for he implied that it was a rule of conduct that the brethren could follow (II Thess. 3:6).

This tradition, furthermore, was not only authentic but authoritative. In Galatians Paul said that his gospel was exclusive in its truth and that no other could be substituted for it. In II Thessalonians 3:14 he said:

And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed.

If he was insisting on his authority as purely personal, he could scarcely escape being called a religious egotist and tyrant. If, on the other hand, he had received his message from God, so that his utterance was the word of God mediated through him by the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 2:13), he had a right to his authority.

Practically every major doctrine in the catalogue of faith is represented in these two small epistles. Although they were not written as doctrinal treatises, nor primarily to present the author's general theological views, they contain a well-rounded body of theological teaching.

Paul and those who received his epistles believed in one living God (I, 1:9), the Father (II, 1:2), who has loved men and has chosen them to enjoy his salvation (II, 2:16; I, 1:4). He has sent deliverance from wrath through Jesus Christ, his

Son (I, 1:10), and has revealed this deliverance through the message of the gospel (I, 1:5; 2:9; II, 2:14). This message has been confirmed and made real by the power of the Holy Spirit (I, 1:5; 4:8). The gospel concerns the Lord Jesus Christ, who was killed by the Jews (I, 2:15). He rose from the dead (I, 1:10; 4:14; 5:10). He is now in heaven (I, 1:10), but he will come again (I, 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; II, 2:1). To him is ascribed deity, for he is called Lord (I, 1:6), God's Son (I, 1:10), and the Lord Jesus Christ (I, 1:1, 3; 5:28; II, 1:1). Believers, (1) receiving the word of God (I, 1:6), (2) turn from idols, serve God, and wait for the return of Christ (I, 1:9-10). Their normal growth is in sanctification (I, 4:3, 7; II, 2:13). In personal life they are to be clean (I, 4:4-6), industrious (I, 4:11-12), prayerful (I, 5:17), and cheerful (I, 5:16). Theoretically and practically the Thessalonian letters embody all the essentials of Christian truth.

"THE SECOND LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS"

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR: The apostle Paul, joined in his salutation by Silvanus and Timothy (1:1), and with a reference to his own signature at the end of the epistle (3:17). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Irenaeus (200 A.D.).

THE CITY OF THESSALONICA: It was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia. Located on the Egnatian Way, a major road from Rome to the eastern provinces, the city served as center of trade and commerce. Today, it is known as Thessaloniki, or Salonica.

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA: The establishment of the church is recorded in Ac 17:1-9. On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) had just left Philippi and passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia to arrive at Thessalonica. As was his custom, Paul immediately located the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbaths concerning Jesus Christ. While some of them were persuaded, including a great number of devout Greeks and leading women, the unbelieving Jews became jealous and created an uproar in the city. Therefore it became necessary to send Paul and Silas away secretly by night to Berea.

Despite such ominous beginnings, a strong church was established in Thessalonica (cf. 1:2-10). Mostly Gentile (cf. 1:9), its members included Jason (Ac 17:9), Aristarchus, and Secundus (Acts 20:4). It had already been the recipient of an earlier letter (First Thessalonians).

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING: Second Thessalonians appears to have been written just a few months, possibly a year, after First Thessalonians. This would place the writing of the epistle during Paul's extended stay at Corinth on his second missionary journey (cf. Ac 18:1-11), sometime around 53 A.D.

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE: The first epistle to the Thessalonians had been written in response to news brought back by Timothy who had made a quick trip there while Paul was in Athens (cf. 1Th 3:1-3,6). Encouraged by their steadfastness in the face of persecution, Paul had exhorted them to holiness in view of the Lord's coming (cf. 1Th 3:12-13; 5:23).

From the second letter, it appears that they remained strong in the Lord despite persecution (cf. 1:3-4). But it is apparent from this letter that misunderstanding about the Lord's coming was present in the church. Some of the members were being troubled by false reports (cf. 2:1-2); others had stopped working, perhaps assuming that the Lord's imminent return meant one did not need to work anymore (cf. 3:11-12).

Paul's purpose in writing this epistle, therefore, is three-fold:

- * To encourage them in their steadfastness under persecution**
- * To correct their misunderstanding about the imminence of the Lord's return**
- * To instruct the congregation on what disciplinary action to take toward those who refused to work**

THEME OF THE EPISTLE: In correcting their misunderstanding about the return of Christ, Paul explains that the Lord will not come right away (cf. 2:1-3). Therefore they need to continue with steadfastness and patience for which they had been commended. A suggested theme of this epistle might therefore be:

"STEADFASTNESS WHILE WAITING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST"

KEY VERSES: 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your

hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

OUTLINE:

INTRODUCTION (1:1-2)

1. Salutation (1)
2. Greetings (2)

I. ENCOURAGEMENT IN PERSECUTIONS (1:3-12)

A. THANKFUL FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (1:3-4)

1. Thanking God for their growing faith and abounding love (1:3)
2. Boasting to others of their patience and faith in all their persecutions (1:4)

B. ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIALS IN VIEW OF THE LORD'S RETURN (1:5-10)

1. Suffering will make them worthy of the kingdom of God (1:5)
2. God will repay those who trouble them (1:6)
3. This will occur when Jesus is revealed from heaven (1:7-10)

C. HIS PRAYER FOR THEM (1:11-12)

1. That God would count them worthy of their calling (1:11a)
2. That God would fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power (1:11b)
3. That the name of Jesus might be glorified in them, and they in Him, according to the grace of God and Christ (1:12)

II. ENLIGHTENMENT ABOUT THE COMING OF THE LORD (2:1-17)

A. DO NOT BE TROUBLED (2:1-2)

1. Concerning the coming of the Lord and our gathering to Him (2:1)
2. By false reports, as though the day had come (2:2)

B. THE APOSTASY MUST COME FIRST (2:3-12)

1. A falling away must occur, and the man of sin revealed (2:3-5)
2. The man of sin is being restrained, though the mystery of lawlessness is already at work (2:6-7)
3. When the lawless one is revealed, the Lord will destroy him with His coming (2:8)
4. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of

Satan, and will mislead those who do not have a love for the truth (2:9-12)

C. STEADFASTNESS ENCOURAGED (2:13-17)

1. Thankful to God for their election through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in truth, having been called by the gospel to obtain glory (2:13-14)
2. A call to stand fast and hold to the traditions taught by word or epistle (2:15)
3. Prayer for their comfort and establishment in every good word and work (2:16-17)

III. EXHORTATIONS TO CHRISTIAN LIVING (3:1-15)

A. A REQUEST FOR PRAYER, AND A PRAYER FOR THEM (3:1-5)

1. Asking them to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course, and he be delivered from evil men (1-2)
2. Expressions of confidence in the Lord, and in their obedience (3-4)
3. Praying that the Lord will direct their hearts into the love of God and patience of Christ (3:5)

B. A CHARGE TO DISCIPLINE THE DISORDERLY (3:6-15)

1. To withdraw from those who do not follow apostolic tradition and example (3:6-9)
2. Especially those who will not work (3:10-12)
3. Don't grow weary in doing good, and avoid those who do not obey the words of the epistle (3:13-15)

CONCLUDING REMARKS (3:16-18)

1. A prayer that the Lord bless them with His peace and presence (3:16)
2. A confirmation of his authorship of this epistle (3:17)
3. A benediction of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ (3:18)



Modern Salonika, site of the ancient city of Thessalonika

Commentary on the Two Thessalonian Letters

Thessalonians 1: 1-10

1:1-4. An elect church

Verses 1-3. A model assembly

Out of deep concern for the new believers in Thessalonica whom he was forced to leave behind, Paul wrote his letter, addressing them as “the congregation of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” As a community of believers, they were at one with God and his Son. (Compare John 17:21; 1 Corinthians 3:23.) Paul’s desire for them to have “favour,” “unmerited kindness,” or “grace” and “peace” signified that they be in possession of all the divine blessings and aid in which believers share and the inner tranquillity of knowing that as beloved children of God they would be sustained and strengthened in whatever trials or distresses they might experience. (1:1)

The apostle Paul used the editorial first person plural verbs (e.g., “we thank”) and pronouns (e.g., “our”). In this letter, one cannot always determine whether he used the editorial “we” or meant to include Silvanus (Silas), if not also Timothy.

Paul's concern was for all the believers in Thessalonica, and for each of them he gave thanks to God when mentioning them in his prayers. (1:2) He recalled their "work of faith," that is, the activity which resulted from their having placed their unqualified trust in the Father and his Son. The "labour of love" which Paul remembered in their case would have been all their labour that was motivated by a love for God, his Son, fellow believers, and fellow humans. Paul also mentioned remembering "the patience of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ." This "patience," endurance, steadfastness, or perseverance would have been the result of having placed their hope in the Son of God. Being associated with him, that hope included awaiting his return in glory and sharing in all the blessings linked to this grand event. The words "before our God and Father" may be understood to mean that the Thessalonians were persevering, enduring, or maintaining patience or steadfastness in the sight of God. (1:2, 3) A number of translations make this meaning explicit. J. B. Phillips paraphrased the words, "endurance in the life that you live before God, the Father of us all." The *New King James Version* reads, "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father." Other translators have chosen to transpose the phrase, linking it to Paul's remembering or recalling. "We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work of faith, labour of love, and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (HCSB) "For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm." (GNT, Second Edition) "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (NIV)

Verse 4. An elect assembly

Paul knew that all who had responded in faith were "sons" of God, and so he confidently spoke of these "brothers beloved by God" as having been chosen, that is, chosen by the Father as his own children. (1:4)

1:5-8. A missionary church

Verse 5. Objects of effective evangelism

The basis for this confidence appears to have been the manner in which the evangel or glad tidings about Jesus Christ had been presented to the Thessalonians. (See the Notes section for additional comments.) The words "our evangel" do not mean that the "good news" originated with Paul but that it was the message he proclaimed. That evangel did not come to the Thessalonians "in word only." It was not a mere speaking of words lacking substance and sincerity, but there was power behind the proclamation, a divine power. Paul preached the evangel while under the powerful guidance of Holy Spirit. He also

did so with complete conviction respecting the truth of the message. The Thessalonian believers knew full well the kind of person Paul had shown himself to be for their sake. He had conducted himself in an exemplary manner as one in the service of God and Christ and as deserving to be entrusted with the evangel. His example for their sake was worthy of imitation. (1:5)

Verses 6-8. Subjects of effective missionary work

The Thessalonian believers became imitators of Paul (and also of his companions) and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and the Lord Jesus Christ faced hostility from unbelievers and persevered when faced with persecution. Likewise, the Thessalonians, despite being confronted with much tribulation or suffering from unbelievers, accepted the “word” or message about Jesus Christ with the joy that the Holy Spirit produces. (1:6)

1:9-10. A serving and waiting church

Verse 9. They served God

Verse 10. They waited for Christ

To believers in the rest of Macedonia and in Achaia (the neighbouring southern province), the Thessalonians had become an example in enduring suffering and in making their faith known. As a seaport, Thessalonica would have been a place frequented by many merchants, travellers, and mariners, making it possible for news about developments in the city to spread far and wide. The Thessalonian believers did not hide their faith, but made it known. Therefore, from them, the “word of the Lord” or the glad tidings about Jesus Christ came to be heard in other parts of Macedonia, in Achaia, and in regions beyond those two provinces. In all those areas, the faith the Thessalonians had in God became known. As a result, Paul (and his companions) did not need to say anything about the basic message respecting Christ. People already knew about how the Thessalonian disciples of God’s Son had responded to Paul and his companions, and what they had done and come to believe. The Thessalonian believers had abandoned lifeless idols and turned to God, choosing to serve the living and true God. They were looking forward to the return of God’s Son from heaven, the Son whom the Father had raised from the dead. That glorious return of the Son would mean being delivered from the coming wrath to be expressed against those defiantly persisting in unbelief. (1:7-10)

Notes:

In verse 1, not all manuscripts end with “peace” (*eiréne*). The following are readings found in various manuscripts: “peace from God and [the] Lord Jesus Christ,” “peace from God [the] Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ,” “peace from

God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ,” “peace from God [the] Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,” and “peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In verse 4, the reference could either be to the manner in which Paul and his companions communicated the message about God’s Son or in the way the Thessalonians received it. Applied to the Thessalonians, this would mean that the message had a powerful effect on them, that it produced a remarkable change in their lives, that God’s spirit became operative upon them, and that they were fully convinced respecting the truth of the message. It does, however, appear more likely that Paul referred to the manner in which the evangel came to be proclaimed. The concluding part of verse 5, with its specific focus on the Proclaimers, would support this conclusion (“as you know what kind [of persons] we came to be among you for your sake”).

1 Thessalonians 2:1-20

2:1-04. Model ministerial conduct under persecution

Verses 1-2. Boldness engendered by persecution

Believers in Thessalonica, “brothers” in Christ, knew that Paul’s coming (along with his companions) to them had not proved to be in vain or without positive results. They had responded in faith and been greatly enriched spiritually. (2:1)

Before arriving in Thessalonica, Paul and Silvanus (Silas) had suffered and been mistreated in a high-handed manner in the city of Philippi. (2:2) After Paul caused a slave girl to lose her predictive ability, which led to a monetary loss for her owners, they led Paul and Silas before the rulers, accusing them of introducing unlawful customs. Paul and Silas were severely beaten with rods upon their bare skin and then imprisoned. The jailer placed them in the inner prison and secured their feet in stocks. (Acts 16:16-24)

Having endured painful mistreatment as disciples of God’s Son, they were in need of courage or boldness to continue proclaiming the glad tidings concerning him. In God or on account of looking to him for strength, they found the courage to speak the evangel of God or the message that had its source in him, doing so in Thessalonica with “much struggle” or in the face of intense hostility. (2:2)

Verses 3-4. Faithfulness called forth by responsibility

The “exhortation” or appeal to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and the one through whom forgiveness of sin had been made possible did not have its source in error, impurity, or deceit. The message was solidly based on truth, and, when proclaiming it, Paul and Silas maintained a pure motive and remained free from

any unworthy aim to derive selfish profit. They revealed themselves to be men whom God had found worthy of being entrusted with the glad tidings. Fully aware that God would be the examiner of their hearts or deep inner selves, they proclaimed the message with the objective of pleasing him, not men. (2:3, 4)

2:5-8. Unselfish ministry in love

Verses 5-7. The proof of selfless love

Verse 8. The expression of selfless love

The Thessalonians knew that Paul and his companions had not resorted to flattery to throw them off guard in an effort to gain some advantage and had not secretly coveted anything they possessed. (Compare Acts 20:33, 34.) Paul could write this with a clear conscience, even calling upon God as witness. (2:5) Perhaps Paul's emphasis on sincerity and purity could be an indication that the hurried departure from Thessalonica under the cover of darkness may have caused some to question his motives and those of Silas. On the other hand, Timothy would never have doubted Paul's pure motives and, yet, the apostle did use similar language in his first letter to him. (1 Timothy 2:7) So the apostle's words may, in themselves, be no clear evidence of any negative thoughts among some in Thessalonica.

Paul and Silas did not seek "glory" from men, wanting special honor or an elevated standing among others. They did not desire such glory from the Thessalonian believers nor from anyone else. (2:6)

As one "sent forth" in the service of Christ from Jerusalem to Syrian Antioch and afterward accompanying Paul upon departing from Antioch to declare the evangel elsewhere, Silas (Silvanus) was an apostle, for the Greek term denotes "one sent forth." (Acts 15:22, 40) As apostles of Christ, Paul and Silas could have made others feel the weight of their authority or made certain demands in keeping with their position, insisting on their dignity. But, according to the oldest Greek manuscripts, they proved to be as "babes" (*népioi*) among the Thessalonians. This could mean that they were unassuming. Later Greek manuscripts read "gentle" (*épioi*). Nothing in their attitude or bearing suggested any desire on their part to lord over others. Like a nurse or a mother tenderly cherishes or comforts her own children, Paul and Silas, motivated by affectionate care and concern, were not only delighted to share the evangel of God (the message centring on Jesus Christ and which had his Father as the ultimate source) but also to give of themselves fully (their "souls"). This was because the Thessalonian believers had become the object of their love. (2:7, 8)

2:9-20. Devoted ministry for others

Verses 9-12. Devoted ministry described

Verses 13-20. Results of a devoted ministry indicated

The Thessalonians, their brothers in Christ, could recall that Paul and Silas were willing to expend themselves fully for them. They knew about their labour and toil during the day and the night or how Paul and Silas had diligently worked to care for their needs so as not to be a burden to anyone when proclaiming the “evangel of God.” (2:9)

The Thessalonian believers and the Observer of all, the Most High God, could testify that Paul and Silas had conducted themselves in a holy or pure, upright, and blameless manner. Like a father with genuine concern for his children, Paul and Silas exhorted, encouraged, and solemnly charged each one of the Thessalonian believers to “walk” or conduct themselves worthily of God, the one calling them to his kingdom (out of this world and into the realm where his appointed King, Jesus Christ, is Lord) and glory (sharing in the excelling splendor of the relationship with him that his beloved Son enjoys). (2:10-12; compare John 17:20-24.)

Without ceasing, Paul (and his companions) thanked God that the Thessalonians had accepted the message he proclaimed, not as the word of men or as a message originating from a human source, but for what it truly was, the “word of God,” which was at work within them, transforming their lives to come to be progressively more like the Lord Jesus Christ. (2:13)

That the Thessalonians had accepted the message as being from God was clearly evident from what they were willing to endure. They had come to be imitators of the congregations of God in Judea, congregations that were at one with Jesus Christ. Jewish believers had suffered much from unbelieving fellow Jews. The letter to the Hebrews (10:32-34, NRSV), written some years later, relates the following: “Recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting.” Like those believing Jews, the Thessalonian believers suffered at the hands of their unbelieving compatriots. Regarding the unbelieving Jews who manifested intense hostility, Paul continued, “They killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and persecuted us, and they are not pleasing God.” (2:14, 15)

In their rabid efforts to prevent Paul and his companions from preaching to non-Jews the message that revealed how an approved relationship with God was possible on the basis of faith in his Son, they demonstrated themselves to be against everyone. (Compare Acts 13:44-50; 14:1-7, 19-22; 17:5-10.) When opposing Christ and his disciples, they filled up the measure of their sins. As the Son of God had said, “The wisdom of God said: ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute’ in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood!” (Luke 11:49-51, NAB) Evidently because the judgment was sure to come, Paul wrote that God’s “wrath has finally [*eis télos*, into the end (possibly meaning “completely”)] come upon them.” (2:15, 16)

Upon being forced to depart from Thessalonica, Paul and Silas found themselves as if orphaned from the believers there. But that short bereavement was not a bereavement in their heart or deep inner self; it was only a separation as to “face” or in person. They greatly longed to see them, and Paul tried hard to do so. Twice he found his purpose frustrated, as he expressed it, “Satan blocked us.” (2:17, 18)

To the apostle Paul, the Thessalonian believers were his “hope,” “joy,” or “crown of boasting” before the Lord Jesus Christ at his arrival (*parousía*, meaning “presence” or “arrival,” the start of the presence) in glory. With confidence, Paul added, “You are our glory and joy.” (2:19, 20) His hope for the Thessalonian believers would have been that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ would find them in an approved state. This would give him reason to be joyful respecting them, as his labour and toil would not have been expended in vain. As loyal disciples of God’s Son, they would be a credit to him or a crown occasioning exultation. Apparently because Paul was confident respecting the genuineness of the faith the Thessalonians manifested, they were a glory or credit to him and a source of joy.

Note: In 2:12, the Greek participle for “calling” is *kaloúntos* (“is calling”) in fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and numerous other manuscripts, whereas fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, and many other manuscripts read *kalésantos* (“has called”).

1 Thessalonians 3: 1-13

3:1-8. Standing fast and unmoveable in the Lord

Verses 1-5. The apostle's concern

Out of deep concern and love for the Thessalonians, Paul was willing to be without the help of a companion while in Athens. So great was his concern for them that he could not bear it any longer not to know just how they were faring. Therefore, he sent Timothy, his brother and theirs, a fellow worker of God in the evangel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage or console them in their faith. As God's fellow worker, Timothy followed divine direction in advancing the glad tidings that focused on Jesus Christ and what he accomplished through his sacrificial death. Paul desired that Timothy's visit would help the Thessalonians to hold firmly to their faith in God's Son, not being shaken by the tribulations or distress the opposition of unbelievers had brought upon them. (3:1-3)

Paul reminded them that they were appointed for "tribulations." He could say this because Jesus Christ had told his disciples, "In the world, you have tribulation." (John 16:33) They would not be shielded from becoming objects of hostility among unbelievers, and Paul had prepared the Thessalonians for this while he was with them. Based on their own experience, they knew that his advance warning about tribulations had proved to be true. Aware of the strain the opposition of unbelievers could have on the Thessalonians, Paul had experienced anxious care for them, wanting to know about their faith (apparently meaning whether they continued to adhere to their faith in Christ) and hoping that the tempter (*Adversary*) had not succeeded in his efforts to tempt them to abandon their faith and nullify Paul's labour. If they had lost their faith, all the efforts of the apostle in advancing the cause of Christ would have proved to be in vain or useless. (3:3-5)

Verses 6-8. The apostle's reward.

Upon his return from Thessalonica, Timothy brought Paul a good report about the believers in the city. Their faith and love had remained intact, and their memory of Paul continued to be a favourable one. They longed to see him as he yearned to see them. Because his Thessalonian brothers in Christ had continued in the faith, Paul, while himself having experienced need and distress or hardship, was comforted or consoled. The good report refreshed him as if he had been infused with new life. As he said, "Now we live if you are standing in the Lord." Firm in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they were "standing." (3:6-8)

3:9-13. Apostolic prayer for holiness

Verses 9-10. The question

The apostle's rhetorical question revealed the depth of his joy. "How can we thank God for you in repayment for all the joy with which we are rejoicing before our God because of you, as night and day we, in superabundant measure, pray to see your faces and to remedy whatever may be lacking in your faith?" (3:9, 10) Paul simply could not thank God enough for the joy the good report about the Thessalonians has brought him. During the day and periods of wakefulness at night, he earnestly prayed that he would be able to see them personally, providing him with the opportunity to assist them in making up for any lack in their faith.

Verses 11-13. The petition

Paul ardently desired that God, the heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus would open the way for him to visit the Thessalonians. His prayer for them was that the Lord Jesus Christ would cause their love for one another and for all (fellow humans generally) to grow and abound or thrive, as was the case with Paul's love for them. At Christ's arrival in glory with all his holy ones or his "mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7), the apostle wanted the Thessalonians to be found with firmly fixed hearts or deep inner selves devotedly attached to God's Son in a state of unblemished holiness or purity before the Father. Paul looked to the Lord Jesus Christ to aid the Thessalonian believers to be approved. (3:11-13)

Notes:

In verses 1 and 5, Paul uses the same expression about not being able to bear not knowing just how the Thessalonians had been affected by tribulations. In its basic sense, the Greek word *stégo* means "cover," often to prevent something undesirable from reaching the covered object. In this context, however, *stégo* denotes "bear," "endure," or "stand." The apostle could no longer stand not knowing how the Thessalonians were faring.

In verse 3, the term for "shaken" is *saíno*. In ancient Greek writings, this term is used to mean "wag the tail" (as applying to dogs) and, by extension, would denote "to flatter" or "to try to win favour." Therefore, some have concluded that Paul may have meant that he was concerned that the persecuted Thessalonians might be "deceived" by those who would show kindness to them in an effort to turn them away from the faith. In the Vulgate, a form of the word *moveo* ("move") is used, and ancient interpreters likewise understood the term in Thessalonians to signify "move," "disturb," or "agitate."

In verse 13, the Greek term *parousía* evidently refers to the “arrival,” the start of the presence.

1 Thessalonians 4: 1-18

4:1-8. Divine call to holiness

Verses 1-3. The authority behind the call

Verses 4-8. The call itself

Paul made his request and directed the encouragement to his brothers in Christ, doing so “in the Lord Jesus.” The apostle thereby indicated that he acted as the representative of God’s beloved Son. While with the Thessalonians, Paul had given them instructions about how to conduct themselves in a manner pleasing to God, and they were “walking” or conducting themselves accordingly. At this time, he requested and admonished them to please God to a greater degree in their conduct, continuing to make progress in living as his approved servants. (4:1)

Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they knew or were fully aware of the instructions he had given them “through the Lord Jesus.” When referring to these instructions, orders, or charges as being given “through the Lord Jesus,” Paul indicated God’s Son to be their source. (4:2)

God’s will for believers was their “holiness” or purity, reflecting his holiness as his people. This required that they refrain from engaging in any kind of sexual immorality. Each of them should “know” or understand how to take possession of his own vessel in “sanctification and honour.” The expression “vessel” could either refer to a person’s own body or to a wife. If understood to refer to the body, the thought would be that the individual should maintain his body in a chaste state. (4:3, 4) If the “vessel” denotes a wife, the counsel would be similar to the admonition Paul gave to the Corinthians: “‘It is well for a man not to touch a woman.’ But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2, NRSV)

Numerous translations interpretively render Paul’s words to the Thessalonians as applying to a wife. “Respect and honour your wife” (CEV), “that each of you know how to acquire a wife for himself in holiness and honour” (NAB). Other translations are explicit in referring to the body. (NIV, NJB, NRSV, REB) Whether the specific reference is to the body or to the wife, the basic point would be the same. The marriage bed should remain undefiled, and an immoral man is not treating the wife in a pure and honourable way. Likewise, sexual

immorality constitutes a misuse of the body, a failure to maintain it in a state of purity and honour.

Anciently, as today, sexual immorality was widespread. In the first century, it was one of the corruptions associated with idolatry. Believers, as Paul admonished, were not to be like people of the nations who did not know God or had no relationship with him and who freely indulged their passionate lust. (4:5)

Paul urged believers not to injure or exploit a brother “in the matter.” If directly related to the previous words, this “matter” relates to upholding a brother’s right to moral purity. The *Contemporary English Version* makes this meaning explicit in the way it paraphrases Paul’s words, “You must not cheat any of the Lord’s followers in matters of sex.” In the footnote, however, the application is to matters “in business.” The apostle added a sobering reason for upholding the rights of one’s brother. “The Lord is an avenger concerning all these things.” As Lord and Judge, Jesus Christ will require an accounting. “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?” “For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.” (Luke 6:46; 2 Corinthians 5:10, NRSV) The Thessalonians were fully aware of the Lord’s role as avenger, for Paul had told them about this while with them and had solemnly affirmed it. (4:6)

God’s “call” to individuals to be his people, his children, was a call to holiness or a life of purity, not impurity. Whoever disregarded the moral teaching that called for living an exemplary life disregarded God, not man or some human authority. It was God who had given his holy spirit to believers, and the spirit exerted a powerful influence that opposed impurity. (4:7, 8)

4:9-12. The elements of a holy life.

Verses 9-10. The basic element of love

Regarding the kind of love or affection that should exist among believers as “brothers” in the family of God’s children, Paul did not see a need for anything to be written. As he said to the Thessalonians, “For you are taught by God to love one another.” They had come to know the greatness of God’s love as revealed through the giving of his beloved Son to effect a liberation from sin and death. (See the Commentary section on 1 John 4:9-11.) They were, in fact, showing love for all the brothers in Macedonia, but Paul desired that they continue to grow in this aspect of their lives. (4:9, 10)

Verses 11-12. Other elements enjoyed

According to Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, certain ones among the believers had drawn the wrong conclusion about the nearness of the arrival of Jesus Christ in glory. Believing the event was at hand, they felt there was no reason for them to work, expecting fellow believers to provide for them. (Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12) This may well be the reason Paul gave the admonition in his first letter for the Thessalonians to live quietly, caring for their own affairs and working with their hands, as he had instructed them while with them. When acting in harmony with the apostle's admonition, they would have been "walking" or conducting themselves respectably in the eyes of persons outside the community of believers and would not be in need of anything on account of indolence. (4:11, 12)

4:13-18. The believer's hope

Verses 13-15. The blessed hope

Verses 16-18. The Lord's coming

It appears that one or more among the believers in Thessalonica had died. This apparently is the reason Paul wanted his Thessalonian brothers not to be in ignorance about those who had fallen asleep or had died. His desire was that they not sorrow as did persons without hope, persons who were totally overcome by grief and had no hope of any kind to mitigate their sadness. Believers had faith that Jesus had been raised from the dead. This faith provided the basis for the hope that God, "through Jesus," would bring "with him" (with Jesus at his arrival or at the start of the presence) those who had fallen asleep or who had died. The words "through Jesus" may indicate that God would raise the dead through or by means of him. Another possibility is that the "ones sleeping through Jesus" are the dead in Christ who would be resurrected and whom God would bring with his Son at the time of the glorious arrival. (4:13, 14)

Apparently Paul referred to authoritative teaching of Jesus Christ when indicating that what he said was "by the word of the Lord." While on earth, Jesus did tell his disciples that he would "return in the glory of his Father with his angels and then repay each one according to his action." (Matthew 16:27) At that time, according to Jesus' words, he would "send out his angels with a great trumpet blast," and they would "gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other end." (Matthew 24:31) For those who had died to receive their reward would require their being raised from the dead. As for those alive at Christ's arrival in glory, they would be gathered to him. Likely Paul had additional teaching from the Lord that made it possible for him to say that, with reference to entering upon their reward, those who would survive until the

arrival of the Lord would not precede those who had died. Accompanied by a word of command, an archangel's voice, and God's trumpet, Christ would descend, revealing himself as having returned in glory, and the dead in Christ or believers would rise first. Afterward all believers then alive would be "caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air," making it possible for them always to be with him. According to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (15:51-54), the living believers would experience a change from a corruptible body to an incorruptible body. The words about the hope for those sleeping in death, words solidly based on the Lord's teaching, would enable the Thessalonians to comfort one another about any from among them who may die or may have died. (4:15-18)

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

5:1-11. The Day of the Lord

Verses 1-3. The Day of the Lord – what is it.

Regarding his return in glory, Jesus Christ told his disciples that the "day and hour" was unknown to the angels and the Son and known only to the Father. (Mark 13:32) It was not for his disciples to know the times and seasons the Father had placed in his own authority or which were under his exclusive control. (Acts 1:7) In parables relating to his return, God's Son repeatedly emphasized that the time of his arrival would be unexpected, requiring his disciples to maintain spiritual wakefulness and divinely approved conduct at all times. (Matthew 24:42-51; 25:1-30; Luke 12:35-48; 21:34-36)

Paul's words to the Thessalonians conveyed the same teaching. There was no need for anyone to write to his Thessalonian brothers in Christ about times and seasons, for they knew that the day of the Lord or the time of his arrival would come like a thief in the night, unexpectedly and without a previous announcement pinpointing the time. (5:1, 2)

In the centuries since then, many have disregarded the straightforward statements of God's Son and the apostle Paul. Drawing primarily on the book of Daniel, they have written much about times and seasons, raising false hopes in those who were willing to believe them. Despite numerous failed predictions, the leadership in some of the existing movements that have focused on "times and seasons" continues to represent itself as knowing that the time is very close, "just around the corner." Therefore, Paul's letter is as relevant today as it was for first century believers who had drawn wrong conclusions about the Lord's

return and made decisions about their personal life based on their erroneous view. (See 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12.)

Continuing to stress that the day of the Lord would come at an unexpected time, Paul said, “Whenever they are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ then sudden disaster is upon them like the labour pains of a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” (5:3) The apostle clearly was not telling the Thessalonians to watch for a time when world rulers would be making a declaration of having attained a state of “peace and safety.” Rather, he was showing that people would not be expecting the Lord Jesus Christ to arrive to execute judgment against them. Their attitude would be like that expressed in 2 Peter 3:4, “Where is his promised arrival? From the day our ancestors fell asleep, everything is continuing as from the start of creation.” Accordingly, people would be feeling that all was well and secure, with no possibility of their facing a day of divine reckoning. Suddenly, however, that day would come upon them, as when a woman is seized by labour pains, and they would not escape adverse judgment.

Verses 4-11. The day of the Lord and the believer

Paul’s Thessalonian brothers, however, were not in darkness about the certainty of Christ’s return in glory so that the day would overtake them unexpectedly as a thief. All of them were “sons of light” and “sons of day,” for they were not guilty of habitually carrying on godless activities under the cover of darkness. Their aim was to live lives free from the shameful deeds that were commonly committed in secret. Accordingly, they were not of the “night nor of the darkness.” It was not fitting for them to sleep like the rest, the unbelievers, whose lives reflected no awareness of any accountability to God and Christ for their actions. Unlike the rest who were “asleep” (blind to their responsibilities and unaware of the grave danger in which they found themselves), believers needed to be awake and sober, not burdened by sinful acts and life’s anxieties but living lives that reflected favourably on the Most High God and his Son. (5:4-6)

Paul continued, “For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.” (5:7) In the case of unbelievers, their whole life is spent in the “night” or in the dark. Their state is therefore one of sleep and their activity like that of a person overindulging in drink. As persons of the “day,” believers needed to remain sober, in full control of their senses, with their hearts or deep inner selves protected by faith and love as by a breastplate. To remain spiritually awake, they needed to maintain a strong faith in God and Christ and love for them, fellow believers, and fellow humans. To safeguard their thinking, they needed the protection of the “hope of salvation,” which hope would serve like a

helmet and enable them to remain focused on the certainty of attaining all the divinely promised blessings. (5:8)

God's purpose for them was to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ and to be delivered from the wrath to come upon all who deliberately and defiantly choose to remain alienated from him. Salvation through Jesus Christ was made possible by what he did in laying down his life in sacrifice. As Paul expressed it, "He died for us." Therefore, whether believers remain "awake" or alive at Christ's return or are "asleep" or dead, they would live with him, for his death opened up this marvellous prospect. In view of their God-given hope, the Thessalonian believers had good reason to heed Paul's admonition to comfort or encourage one another and to build up or strengthen one another, as they were also doing at the time. (5:9-11)

5:12-15. Exhortations toward mutual harmony

Verse 12-13. Showing honour to those in places of responsibility

Verses 13b-15. General admonition for harmony

5: 16-22. Various exhortations

Verses 16-18. Rejoice, pray, and be thankful

Verse 19. Do not quench the Spirit

Next Paul focused on the responsibilities of the Thessalonian believers as brothers in the family of God's beloved children. Among them were those who laboured for them in promoting their spiritual well-being, "stood before" them "in the Lord" as teachers and caring shepherds, and admonished them regarding their conduct. Paul asked that the Thessalonians grant these faithful ones in their midst the recognition they deserved and show them high esteem in love on account of their work. He urged them to be peaceable among themselves, preserving a loving spirit and maintaining a good relationship with one another. As for the disorderly ones among them, Paul admonished the Thessalonians to correct the thinking of these idlers. Despondent or discouraged ones needed consolation, and the weak required loving support to strengthen them. As members of the spiritual family did have flaws, the Thessalonians needed to be patient or forbearing with everyone. All were to see to it that no one repaid wrong for wrong but that all were seeking the good of one another and of all others or of all who were not part of their spiritual family. Especially because of what God and Christ had done for them, their help and guidance, and the

certainty of seeing the fulfilment of the divine promises, believers had good reason to rejoice always. (5:12-16)

The apostle continued, “Pray continually; in everything, give thanks, for this is God’s will in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit. Do not be contemptuous of prophecies, but test everything; cling to the good. Shun every form of evil.” (5:17-22)

As persons continuing to need God’s help, direction, and strength, believers rightly persevere in prayer, never ceasing to make their petitions. (5:17) They also maintain a spirit of gratitude. The phrase “in everything” could mean that thanks be given in all circumstances or for everything. “This is God’s will in Christ” may mean that always rejoicing, praying constantly, and giving thanks are what the Most High desires that believers do, those who are “in Christ” or at one with him. There is also a possibility that the words “this is God’s will” specifically relate to the giving of thanks. (5:18)

Upon first coming under the influence of God’s spirit, new believers may have manifested an intense fervour. As a result, others may have been inclined to want to put out the “fire” that the spirit had generated. This aspect may explain the reason for Paul’s admonition not to “quench the spirit.” (5:19)

Verses 20-22. Other injunctions

Prophetic utterances may likewise have been accompanied by an extraordinary intensity of feeling and fervour, which could have prompted certain ones to look upon the prophetic utterances with contempt and thus would have made Paul’s exhortation appropriate. (5:20) Still, prophetic utterances needed to be tested, making sure they had God as their source. (See the Commentary section on 1 John 4:1.) Then, whatever testing revealed to be good should have been valued and retained. (5:21) Evil of every kind, on the other hand, needed to be rejected and abhorred. (5:22)

5:23-24. Sanctification for the whole man

Verse 23. The whole man set apart for God

Verse 24; The certainty of complete sanctification

As the source of an inner tranquillity because of his love and care, the Father is the “God of peace.” Paul prayed that God would sanctify the Thessalonians completely, setting them apart as holy, and that their whole spirit, soul, and body

be kept (or, that their spirit, soul, and body be kept whole) blameless at the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ. This may denote that the apostle's prayerful desire was for each one of the Thessalonians to be preserved in their entirety as a person—spirit, soul, and body—and found blameless at the time of Christ's arrival, the start of his presence. The "spirit" may be understood to denote the motivating and energizing power of the inner being; the soul, the life of the individual in its outward manifestation, and the body, the human body with all its members. Because the one who had called them, the Most High God, is faithful or completely dependable and trustworthy, the Thessalonian believers could be confident that he would preserve them as approved persons. As Paul expressed it, "The one calling you is faithful, and he will also do it." (5:23, 24)

5:25-28. Closing charge

Verses 25-26. Request for prayer

Paul, too, was in need of God's guidance, care, and help. He therefore included the request for the Thessalonian believers to pray for him. (5:25)

They were members of a beloved family of God's children. So the apostle encouraged them to greet one another with a "holy kiss," a kiss that reflected their holy standing and affection for one another. (5:26)

Verses 27-28. Charge concerning reading

Paul wanted all of the believers in Thessalonica to know what he had written. Therefore, he solemnly charged them to read the letter "to all the brothers." With all of them knowing what he had written, they would have been less likely to believe teachings differing from what they had personally heard. (5:27)

For the favour, unmerited kindness, or grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with the Thessalonians would have meant for them to continue to benefit from his aid and guidance. (5:28)

Notes:

In verse 4, the plural "thieves" (not the singular "thief") appears in fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. This could mean that the day would not overtake believers like the coming of day might surprise thieves while engaged in their nightly lawless activity.

In verse 21, many manuscripts read "but [*dé*] test"; other manuscripts omit "but."

Instead of “brothers” (verse 27), other manuscripts read either “holy brothers” or “holy ones.” Many manuscripts conclude the letter with “Amen.”

Questionnaire 1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

1:1 From whom is this letter? To whom is the letter? What is the prayer?

1:2 What do the writers say that they always do? What do you think about that?

1:3 What do the writers speak about? What things do they remember? What will you do because you know that?

1:4 What things do ‘we know’? What do you think about that?

1:5 What things do you learn about the good news? What do you learn about the writers? What do you think about all that?

1:6 What had the Christians done? Why had they done that? Make a list of the results. What do you think about all that?

1:7 What had happened? Who might have benefited?

1:8 What happened? Where had people heard about these Christians? What was it that they had heard? What will you do because you know about that?

1:9 What things did the people speak about? What changes had happened? What do you think about all that?

1:10 For whom were they waiting? Who is that? What does he do?

Chapter 2

2:1 What did those people know? Who were the people that knew it?

2:2 What had happened before? What had God done? What was the result of that?

2:3 What things do you learn about their appeal? What do you think about all that? Why might that have been important?

2:4 How did the writers ‘always speak’? What were the reasons for that? What had God done for the writers? What do you think that ‘try to please’ means here? What will you do because you know that?

2:5 What did the writers say that they never did? What was not a reason for their actions? Who was the witness of those things?

2:6 What did the writers not try to do? What might they have done? What do you think about all that?

2:7 How did the writers say that they behaved? What will be different because you know about that?

2:8 What did the writers desire? What did they share? What did they also give? What will you do because you know about that?

2:9 What should the original readers remember? What did the writers do as they told 'the good news from God'? Why did they do that? What do you think about all that?

2:10 What things did the readers know? What do you think about all that?

2:11 How had the writers dealt with each of them? What do you think about that?

2:12 What did the writers aim to achieve by their efforts? What things had they done? Why had they done that? What do you think about all that?

2:13 Why did the writers continue to thank God all the time? What is the message that the writers had told to the original readers? What is God doing? What do you think about all that?

2:14 How did the writers describe the relations that they had with the original readers? How did the readers change? How did they suffer? What will you do because you know about that?

2:15 What things had the *Jews done? What were the results of what they had done? What do you think about all that?

2:16 What did the *Jews try to do? What was the result of that? What do you think about all that? What will you do because you know that?

2:17 What things had happened? What had the writers tried to do? What do you think about that?

2:18 What had happened? What do you think about that?

2:19 What will happen? When will it happen? What do you think about that?

2:20 What might this mean? What do you think about that?

Chapter 3

3:1 What happened? What do you think about that?

3:2 Who sent Timothy? (Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:1 also.) What do you learn about Timothy? Why had they sent him? What do you think about all that?

3:3 Of what had the writers been afraid? What did the readers know? What will you do because you know that?

3:4 About what had the writers warned the readers? What had happened? What do you think about that?

3:5 Why could Paul not wait for a longer time? (Look at verse 4 also.) What did he do? Make a list of the reasons why he did that. What do you think about all that?

3:6 What things happened? What kind of report did Timothy bring? What parts of Timothy's report would have made Paul glad?

3:7 What do you know about the writers' circumstances? What happened because of the news that Timothy brought back? What do you think about that?

3:8 What has changed? What do you think about that?

3:9 What can the writers not do? What do they do? What helps them to do that? What do you think about that?

3:10 What do the writers do? What do they want to teach? About what might that have been?

3:11 Use your own words to express this prayer. What do you learn about how the writers consider God? What do you think about that?

3:12 What is the prayer? What might be different if God answered that prayer in your *community?

3:13 Make a list of the results that the writers expect. (Look at verse 12 also.) What must they be 'holy and ready for'? What do you think about that?

Chapter 4

4:1 What had the 'brothers and sisters' learned? What had they been doing? What did the writers 'ask and urge' them to do? What was the basic reason for that?

4:2 What did the readers know? Where had those instructions come from?

4:3 What does God want? What do you learn about sex? What will you do because you know that?

4:4 What should each person know? Why might people need to 'rule' their body?

4:5 What should they not allow? Why?

4:6 What things does the writer warn about? Why might that have been necessary? What do you think about all this? What will you do because you know that?

4:7 What does God want? What do you think about that?

4:8 What will happen if the readers 'refuse this teaching'? Why would they want to do what the writers propose? From whom might the readers receive help?

4:9 About what do the writers not need to write? Why is that? What will you do because you know that?

4:10 What ‘is a fact’? What do the writers urge the readers to do? What do you think about that?

4:11 What should the readers try hard to do? What should they do to get funds for that? What might you do about that?

4:12 Make a list of the results. How would the readers earn those results? (Look at verse 11 also.)

4:13 About what truth did the writers want them to know? What would be the result of that knowledge? What do you think about that?

4:14 Make a list of the things that ‘we believe’. What does that mean for you and for your family?

4:15 What has the *Lord told us? What do you think about that?

4:16 Make a list of the things that will happen. Describe what might happen in your *community at that time.

4:17 Make a list of the things will happen after that. Use your own words to express this. What might that experience be like?

4:18 What must we do? How will you do that? With whom will you do it?

Chapter 5

5:1 What do the writers not need to do?

5:2 What do the first readers know? What do you think about that?

5:3 What things do you learn about that ‘day’? (Look at verse 2 also.) What would people say? What would happen to them? What would the experience be like? What do you think about all that?

5:4 What was different for the people who first read this letter? (Look at verse 3 also.) What should not happen? What do you think about that?

5:5 Why should ‘you’ not be surprised? (Look at verse 4 also.) How are ‘we’ different from other people? What difference might that make?

5:6 So, what will be different? What sort of results will there be? Compare ‘ourselves’ with ‘those’. What do you think about all that?

5:7 What happens ‘at night’? What do you think about that?

5:8 Who are ‘we’? How must ‘we’ be? How should ‘our *faith and love’ help us? How should ‘our hope’ help us? What do you think about those things?

5:9 What did God ‘not choose’? What did he choose for us? What do you think about all that?

5:10 Why did Jesus die? What do you learn about that? What do you think about all that?

5:11 What must the readers do? In what way should they do it? What will you do because you know that?

5:12 What do the writers request? Why? What will you do because you know that?

5:13 How should we behave towards our leaders? How should we live 'with each other'? What will you do because you know all that?

5:14 Whom do the writers urge the readers to warn? Whom must they help? How should we be 'with all people'? Why might the writers teach those things?

5:15 What must 'you' not do? What should 'you' aim to do? What will you do because you know these things?

5:16 What should you do always? How might that happen? What might be the result?

5:17 What must you do? What do you think about that?

5:18 What must you do 'no matter what happens'? Why? What do you think about all that?

5:19 What should you not do? What will you do?

5:20 What should you not do? What will be different when you follow these instructions?

5:21 What must you do? What will be different when you do this?

5:22 What should you do? What will you do?

5:23 Make a list of the writers' requests to God. What things will be different as a result? What will you do because you know that?

5:24 What has God done? What will he do? (Look at verse 23 also.) Why?

5:25 What should the readers do? What will you do?

5:26 What is the instruction? What difference might that make?

5:27 What does the writer urge? What difference might that make?

5:28 What is the prayer? What difference will his '*grace' make?



The Arch of Galerius straddled Egnatian Way as it entered Thessalonica from the east



2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

1:1-4. The church recommended

Verses 1-2. Greetings

Paul introduced his second letter to the Thessalonians in basically the same way as he did his first one. “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the congregation of the Thessalonians in God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ. Favour to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:1, 2)

Verses 3-4. The commendation

Paul used the editorial first person plural verbs and pronouns, but it is not always apparent when he also meant to include Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy. The apostle considered it as something noble or deserving to feel obligated always to thank God for the Thessalonians, as their faith (their trust in God and his Son) was growing wonderfully and their love for one another was increasing. Faced with persecutions and distress of various kinds, the Thessalonians had maintained exemplary endurance or steadfastness and faith. Therefore, Paul, with an appropriate pride, could mention their example in faith and perseverance to other congregations of God. (1:3, 4)

1:5-10. The church comforted

Verses 5-6. The reason for their sufferings

Verses 7-10. The basis of comfort

The faith and steadfastness of the Thessalonians while undergoing suffering revealed God’s righteous judgment. This may be from the standpoint that they were sustained and strengthened through help made available through his spirit and that they were considered worthy to be dishonoured for him and his beloved Son. (Compare Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 1:27-30; 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:17; 1 Peter 2:19-21.) Their faith and endurance confirmed that they had God’s approval and would be found deserving of his kingdom for which they were suffering. As part of God’s kingdom, they would share with his appointed king, the Lord Jesus Christ, all the joys and blessings associated with his royal realm. (1:5)

God’s righteousness or justice would also be revealed in his repaying those responsible for causing believers to suffer unjustly. At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, accompanied by his powerful angels, “in flaming fire,” afflicted believers would experience relief, but all who deliberately and defiantly chose not to know God and refused to obey the evangel of the Lord Jesus would

face doom. Disobeying the evangel would mean rejecting Jesus Christ as God's Son and his sacrificial death as the means for having sins forgiven and being delivered from divine wrath. The execution of divine justice on defiant unbelievers is unalterable—eternal destruction or ruin “from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power.” This would signify that the defiant ones would be permanently cut off from the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious strength employed for beneficent purposes. Never would the face of God's Son be turned to them in a favourable way. They would have no share in the marvellous things Jesus Christ would accomplish by his extraordinary might. (1:6-9)

Paul referred to the “revelation of the Lord Jesus” as the “day” he would be “glorified in his holy ones and to be marvelled at in all those having believed.” This could mean that, by reason of what Christ had done for them, his glory, magnificence, or splendour would be reflected in the holy ones or the believers and that the wonderment with which he would be regarded would likewise be the result of his effectual working within them. The Greek preposition *en* (“in”), however, may also mean “by” or “among,” and this would allow for other possible meanings. Christ would be glorified by or among believers and also be marvelled at among them. Or, Christ would be glorified in believers and marvelled at among them. The apostle included the Thessalonians as participants in the blessings of Christ's revelation by specifically mentioning them as suffering affliction (1:7) and then saying that “our testimony to you was believed.” (1:10) They had responded in faith to the message about God's Son.

1:11-12. Intercession for the church

Verse 11. The prayer

In view of all that the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ would mean for the Thessalonian believers, Paul always prayed that God would consider them worthy of the “calling” to be his people or his children and would fulfil “every good will of goodness and work of faith in power.” The expression “good will of goodness” could denote the will or desire to carry out what is good. It has been rendered “good purpose” (NAB, NIV, REB), “good resolve,” and “desires for goodness” (NJB). The “work of faith” would signify the activity or conduct that is a product of faith. If “in power” is specifically linked to “faith,” this would mean that the activity would be the result of the powerful working of faith. There is a possibility, however, that “in power” relates to divine action. The words could then be understood to mean that God, by his power, would fulfill every good purpose and work of faith or make it possible for the Thessalonians to carry out their noble desires and the activity motivated by faith. (1:11)

Verse 12. The purpose

In his prayer for the Thessalonians, Paul's desire was, as he said, that "the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the favour of our God and [the] Lord Jesus Christ." The "name" denotes the person of the Son of God, and "in you" may be understood to mean by or among the Thessalonian believers. Because they were at one with Christ as members of his body, they would share in his glory, splendour, or grandeur and so would be glorified "in him." The bringing of glory to Christ's name and the sharing of the Thessalonian believers in his glory were made possible through the favor, unmerited kindness, or grace of God and of his Son. (1:12)

Note: In verse 2, manuscripts variously read "our Father and [the] Lord," "Father and our Lord," and "our Father and our Lord," and "Father and Lord."

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

2:1-5. The church's outtaking and the Day of the Lord

Verses 1-2. A misunderstanding exposed

Certain ones of Paul's Thessalonian brothers in Christ had come to a wrong view about the arrival of the Lord and their being gathered to him. The apostle therefore appealed to them not to be quickly shaken or unsettled in their thinking nor to be alarmed, startled, or stirred to undue excitement by some communication supposedly indicating that the day of the Lord had come. The apostle referred to such communication as being "through a spirit or through a word or through a letter as from us." A "spirit" may designate a prophetic or spirit-inspired utterance, and a "word" could denote an oral message. The words "as from us" may relate only to a letter Paul allegedly had sent or the phrase could also include the prophetic utterance and oral message. (2:1, 2) Both meanings are reflected in translations. "They may say that they heard this directly from the Holy Spirit, or from someone else, or even that they read it in one of our letters." (CEV) "We ask you ... not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a 'spirit,' or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand." (NAB) "Perhaps it is thought that we said this while prophesying or preaching, or that we wrote it in a letter." (GNT, Second Edition) "Someone may say this in a prophecy or in a message or in a letter as if it came from us." (NCV) "Even if they claim to have had a vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us, don't believe them." (NLT)

Verses 3-5. The error refuted

Paul urged the Thessalonian believers not to allow anyone to mislead them in any way about the Lord's arrival. This event would not take place until after the coming of the "apostasy" or the great rebellion against God and the revelation of the "man of lawlessness, the son of destruction." This "man of lawlessness" (or, according to the reading of other manuscripts, "man of sin") would be guilty of God-defying conduct and, as "the son of destruction," be doomed to everlasting ruin. He would exalt himself over and resist everything regarded as "god" or sacred, seating himself in the sanctuary of God and claiming to be god. (2:3, 4)

2:6-9. The church's outtaking and the man of sin

Verses 6-7. The church's outtaking and the Holy Spirit

Verses 8-9. The church's outtaking and the man of sin

Paul's words suggest that the "man of lawlessness" is a product of the "apostasy" or rebellion against God. Just what form this development may take prior to Christ's return in glory falls in the realm of conjecture, especially since the information available today is more limited than what Paul had shared with the Thessalonians. He reminded them that he had previously told them about this development, but whatever he said in addition to the brief statement in his letter has long ceased to be preserved in living memory. Lost to present readers of his letter is the knowledge about what was restraining or holding back the terrifying development until the appointed time for the revealing of the "man of lawlessness." As Paul said, however, the Thessalonian believers did know. In their time, "the mystery of lawlessness" was already at work, operating in a hidden or secret manner as a corrupting influence. When the restraining one or thing would no longer be functioning in that capacity, the lawless one would be revealed or be openly active. The Lord Jesus Christ would slay him with "the spirit of his mouth" or the expression of the condemnatory judgment that would come from his mouth. The manifestation of Christ's arrival would render the "man of lawlessness" powerless. (2:5-8)

2:10-12. The church's outtaking and latter-day truth rejecters

Verse 10. The doom of truth rejecters

Verses 11-12. The reason for their doom

Satan (*the adversary*) would be the source of the power the "man of lawlessness" would exercise. Through the workings of Satan, the "man of

lawlessness” would display might and lying signs and wonders. Those who would perish would be taken in by the evil deception. Their being deceived would be retribution for their deliberate failure to accept the “love of the truth,” which could have led to their salvation or deliverance from divine wrath. Instead of desiring truth, the marvellous truth that centres on the Son of God, loving it and considering it as precious, they would prefer falsehood and delusion. God, therefore, would send them exactly what they want or let nothing stand in the way of their being exposed to the workings of error so that they might believe the lie. Consequently, their adverse judgment would befall them because they deliberately and defiantly chose not to believe the truth but delighted in wrongdoing. (2:9-12)

2:13-17. The church’s outtaking and the Thessalonians

Verses 13-14. The Thessalonians were a cause for thanks

Paul considered himself obligated always to thank God for the Thessalonian believers, his brothers beloved by the Lord, because God had chosen them as “firstfruits” or as an acceptable offering (*aparché*, but *ap’ archés* [“from (the) beginning”] according to other manuscripts, including fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus) “for salvation in sanctification of the spirit and faith in [the] truth.” It was through the operation of God’s spirit and their faith in the truth (with its specific focus on God’s Son) that believers were sanctified or set apart as holy and thus divinely approved. The evangel or the message about Jesus Christ proved to be the means by which God had called them to be his sanctified people, with salvation or eternal life in view. Paul referred to it as “our evangel,” meaning the glad tidings that he proclaimed. The eventual result of God’s calling would be for the Thessalonian believers to share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. For them to share in his glory would mean enjoying all the joys and blessings associated with being members of his body. (2:13, 14)

Verses 15-17. They were objects of exhortation and prayer

In view of all that sharing in Christ’s glory would mean for them, they had good reason to heed Paul’s admonition to stand firm and to adhere to the traditions they had been taught, whether through the apostle’s word or a letter from him. Recognizing the need the Thessalonian believers had for the help of God and his Son, Paul continued with the prayerful expression, “May our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope in favour, comfort your hearts and firmly establish you in every good work and word.” (2:15-17)

Through his favour or unmerited kindness, the Father granted believers, those whom he loved and continues to love, comfort that is lasting and that can sustain them in whatever trials and suffering they might experience. He has also given them a “good hope,” the hope of sharing in the fulfilment of all the promises made to them as his children. For the hearts of the Thessalonian believers to be comforted could have included their being granted an inner calm from knowing that the Son of God and his Father would continue to aid, guide, sustain, and strengthen them. The Father and his Son would also “firmly establish” them “in every good work and word,” enabling them to conduct themselves aright and to express themselves in a manner that would be becoming of their dignified standing as sons or children of God and brothers of Christ. (2:16, 17)

Notes:

It is only natural for people who find themselves in distressing circumstances to long for relief. This desire can make them vulnerable to being deceived by claims of individuals representing themselves as being “in the know” or in possession of unique information about the nearness of deliverance from hardships. As in the case of believers in Thessalonica to whom Paul had imparted the truth about Christ’s return in glory but who nevertheless were induced to draw wrong conclusions, many in more recent times have similarly become unsettled in mind and excited about the closeness of this event. Although the Son of God stressed that such developments as wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilences were not to be the happenings on which his disciples should focus, religious movements with an end-times orientation have pointed to and continue to point to such occurrences as a sign that the culmination is near. (Matthew 24:4-8; Mark 13:5-8; Luke 21:8-10) When prominent ones within such movements or their official publications express that the end is “very close,” the loyal membership is often stirred to a renewed state of excitement and may be induced to make choices that adversely affect their future well-being.

As some of the Thessalonians became idlers because of having adopted the wrong view of Christ’s return, many members in movements with an undue end-times focus tend to make unwise financial decisions, do not plan for the future, fail to utilize educational opportunities to the full, and may even speak disparagingly of those who apply themselves scholastically and choose to prepare themselves for careers best suited for their aptitudes and abilities. Therefore, in lands where social programs are in place, members of these movements may disproportionately be found among those taking advantage of governmental arrangements for needy ones. Like the idlers among the Thessalonian believers, their way of life is one that unbelieving outsiders look

upon unfavourably. Instead of winning the respect of outsiders, they contribute to dishonouring God and Christ. The prime responsibility for this, of course, falls on the leadership of the respective movements, as the leadership exercises the teaching authority that gives rise to the wrong views. Tragically, many who become disillusioned by these movements when wrongly generated hopes fail to materialize also become impervious to the message of the Scriptures and tend to choose paths that either ignore God and Christ or reflect total unbelief.

In the answer Jesus Christ gave to his apostles about the destruction of Jerusalem and his return, he provided the warning for them not to be deceived by any expressions about Messianic deliverance in connection with the destruction to come upon Jerusalem. (Matthew 24:4, 23-26; Mark 13:5, 21, 22; Luke 21:8) That warning about not being deceived should also be taken seriously respecting his return in glory at a time only known to the Father.

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus, who witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, confirms that many Jews were deceived and relates what happened to them. In his *Wars*, Book VI, chapter V, paragraph 2 (Whiston's translation), he wrote: "The soldiers also came to the rest of the cloisters that were in the outer [court of the] temple, whither the women and children, and a great mixed multitude of the people fled, in number about six thousand. But before Caesar had determined anything about these people, or given the commanders any orders relating to them, the soldiers were in such a rage, that they set the cloister on fire; by which means it came to pass that some of these were destroyed by throwing themselves down headlong, and some were burnt in the cloisters themselves. Nor did any one of them escape with his life. A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there were then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now, a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such deliverance."

There is grave danger when perceived self-interest or personal desire takes precedence over love for truth. King Ahab of Israel, for example, did not want to hear that his plan to recapture Ramoth-gilead would fail. Even after YHWH's prophet Micaiah portrayed for him a heavenly scene revealing that the very message about certain success he wanted to hear was the product of a "lying

spirit” in the mouths of all his prophets and that he himself would die in the attempt to seize Ramoth-gilead, Ahab still chose to believe the lie, although taking the precaution of not wearing his royal attire. That precaution, however, did not save him from being mortally wounded. (1 Kings 22:2-35) Similarly, during the time Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem and Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon, God allowed an operation of error to go to the people. The false prophets proclaimed what the people wanted to hear, and the people turned a deaf ear to the proclamation of the true prophets that could have benefited them. (Jeremiah 5:12, 13, 31; 14:11-16; 23:16-18, 21-32; 27:8-18; 28:1-11; Ezekiel 13:2-19; 14:9) The same thing will happen when the “man of lawlessness” is revealed.

In numerous respects, the description of the “man of lawlessness” parallels the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes, which fit the words recorded in the book of Daniel and are narrated in 1 and 2 Maccabees. The quotations that follow are rendered according to the Septuagint version of Daniel (with the major variations of Theodotian being provided in brackets).

Respecting a “little horn” that is designated as a “king,” Daniel 7:25 says, “And he will speak words against the Most High, wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and attempt to change times and law, and all things will be given into his hands for a time and times and half a time.”

“And the king will do according to his will, be provoked to anger, and be exalted over every god [And he will do according to his will, and the king will be exalted and magnified over every god], and he will speak outrageous things against the God of gods.” (11:36)

“The king [Antiochus Epiphanes] sent messengers with letters to Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, ordering them to follow customs foreign to their land; to prohibit holocausts, sacrifices, and libations in the sanctuary, to profane the Sabbaths and feast days, to desecrate the sanctuary and the sacred ministers, to build pagan altars and temples and shrines, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, to leave their sons uncircumcised, and to let themselves be defiled with every kind of impurity and abomination, so that they might forget the law and change all their observances. Whoever refused to act according to the command of the king should be put to death.” (1 Maccabees 1:44-50, NAB)

“The king sent an Athenian senator to force the Jews to abandon the customs of their ancestors and live no longer by the laws of God; also to profane the temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus... This intensified the evil in an intolerable and utterly disgusting way. The Gentiles filled the temple with

debauchery and revelry; they amused themselves with prostitutes and had intercourse with women even in the sacred court. They also brought into the temple things that were forbidden, so that the altar was covered with abominable offerings prohibited by the laws.” (2 Maccabees 6:1-5, NAB)

Past history illustrates what can happen when there is a deliberate and defiant rejection of God. Crowds have been readily induced to follow unworthy ends. In fact, whenever humans are exalted and regarded as more than mere earthlings, the potential exists for exalting one human to the level of a deity and rendering him blind allegiance. So there would not be anything particularly surprising for the “man of lawlessness” to be one man.

Early interpreters did expect the “man of lawlessness” to be one man—the Antichrist. Justin Martyr (second century) wrote that Christ “shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians.” Tertullian (c. 155?-230?) stated, “According indeed to our view, he is Antichrist; as it is taught us in both the ancient and the new prophecies, and *especially* by the Apostle John, who says that ‘already many false prophets are gone out into the world.’” Hippolytus (who died in 235) also identified the “man of lawlessness” as being Antichrist, as did his contemporary Origen. In the fourth century, John Chrysostom, after referring to the “man of lawlessness” as being “some man,” continued, “For he will not introduce idolatry, but will be a kind of opponent to God; he will abolish all the gods, and will order men to worship him instead of God, and he will be seated in the temple of God, not that in Jerusalem only, but also in every Church.”

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

3:1-5. Apostolic request for prayer

Verses 1-2. The request

Paul requested the Thessalonian believers, his brothers, to pray for him (and also his companions) in order that the word of the Lord would “run” and be glorified, as it was in their case. (3:1) Apparently the “running” of the “word” would denote rapid and unimpeded progress of the message about God’s Son. Those accepting the “word of the Lord,” as had Paul’s Thessalonian brothers, would glorify it, acknowledging its inestimable value and, with divine help, transforming their lives in imitation of Jesus Christ. (Compare Acts 13:48.)

Not all would respond in faith to the “word of the Lord,” and so faith would not be the possession of all. Therefore, the apostle requested that his Thessalonian brothers pray that he (and his companions) would be delivered from evil and corrupt men or vile and faithless people. (3:2)

Verses 3-5. The basis for the request

Aware of the opposition the Thessalonians were facing, Paul reminded them of the faithfulness, trustworthiness, or dependability of the Lord Jesus Christ. They could be confident that God’s Son would strengthen them and safeguard them from the wicked one, the devil. (3:3)

It may be that Paul referred to being “confident in the Lord” about his Thessalonian brothers because of his absolute trust in Christ’s care for them. (Compare John 10:27, 28.) The apostle did not doubt that the Thessalonians would respond to his spirit-guided admonition, heeding and continuing to heed it as Christ’s loyal disciples. As for the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul’s prayerful desire was that he would direct the “hearts” or the deep inner selves of the Thessalonians to “the love of God and to the steadfastness of the Christ.” (3:4, 5) For his Thessalonian brothers, this would mean that, from deep within themselves, they would be motivated to love God and this would be evident in their faithful adherence to his commands. (Compare 1 John 5:3, 4.) The “steadfastness of the Christ” could refer to their manifesting the same kind of endurance, patience, or perseverance that Christ displayed. (Compare 1 Peter 2:21-23.)

3:6-15. Instruction concerning disciplinary separation

Verse 6. The general principle of separation

Verses 7-9. The apostolic example

Verses 10-11. The disorder specified

Verses 12-15. The cure indicated

Although much about the Thessalonian believers deserved commendation, some among them were disorderly or idle, not living in harmony with the traditions they had received from Paul. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ or on the basis of the authority the Lord had granted him as an apostle, he directed that the rest of the Thessalonians withdraw themselves from such disorderly ones. Paul (and his companions) had set an impeccable example as workers. So his Thessalonian brothers knew how they should imitate him (and his

companions), for they had not conducted themselves in a disorderly way or as idlers. They did not eat food from anyone for nothing, but laboured during the day and the night so as not to be a burden to anyone. In view of their diligent efforts to aid the Thessalonians spiritually, Paul and his companions were entitled to material assistance, as he said, “Not that we did not have the authority” or the right to receive food and other assistance. In order to set an example deserving of imitation, however, the apostle and his companions did not avail themselves of this “authority” or right. When with them, Paul set forth the rule, “If anyone does not want to work, let him not eat.” (3:6-10)

The apostle must have been distressed to hear that some among the Thessalonian believers were idlers, not working but injecting themselves into the affairs of others. In view of Paul’s having to correct the Thessalonian believers about Christ’s return in glory, the idlers may have regarded the nearness of Christ’s return as an excuse for not working. The apostle’s words to such idlers left no doubt about what they should be doing. He ordered and exhorted them in the Lord Jesus Christ, or on the basis of the Lord’s authority, to work and eat their own bread, or food they themselves had purchased. (3:11, 12)

As for the other Thessalonian brothers, Paul urged them not to be negligent in doing what is right or good. He did not want the attitude of the idlers to have an adverse effect on them. In the case of anyone failing to respond to the admonition in Paul’s letter, the Thessalonians were to take note of such a one and terminate association with him so that he might become ashamed about his idleness and change. Nevertheless, they were not to treat him like an enemy but to admonish him as their brother, one for whom they had concern and love. (3:13-15)

3:16-18 Concluding benediction

Verses 16,18. The benediction

Verse 17. The salutation

Jesus Christ is the “Lord of peace,” the one through whom the inner peace or tranquillity resulting from an approved relationship with the Father is possible. Paul’s prayerful request was for the Lord to give the Thessalonian believers peace always and in every “way” (*trópos*, but other manuscripts say “place” [*tópos*]). For the Thessalonian believers to possess this peace would mean their enjoyment of the inner calmness from knowing they would continue to benefit from divine care, guidance, and safeguarding. Paul also desired that the Lord be

with all of them, which would mean that they would continue to be under his care and guidance. (3:16)

Possibly because communication had wrongly been attributed to him (2:2), Paul made a point to call attention to the greeting written with his own hand, identifying it as his writing style and an authenticating sign in every one of his letters. He concluded, “The favour of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with all of you.” This is almost identical to the way in which he concluded his first letter (3:17, 18)



Six of the ‘politarchs’ who ruled Thessalonica are named in this Greek inscription from the Gate of Vardar.

Questionnaire 2 Thessalonians

1. When was the second letter to the Thessalonians written?
2. What does Paul have to say about the coming of Jesus in 2 Thessalonians?
3. What does Paul have to say about idleness? What does he have to say about his ministry among the Thessalonians?
4. Paul requests prayer. For what did he ask for prayer?

Review Questions on the two Thessalonian letters

- 1) On which missionary journey was the church at Thessalonica established?
- Paul's second missionary journey
- 2) Where can we read about the establishment of the church at Thessalonica?
- Acts 17:1-9

- 3) What two letters were written to this congregation - 1st and 2nd Thessalonians
- 4) From where and when did Paul write 2nd Thessalonians - From Corinth, sometime around 53 A.D.
- 5) What length of time had passed between the writing of the two epistles? - A few months, maybe a year
- 6) Why did Paul write 2nd Thessalonians (see Purpose of The Epistle)?
- To encourage them in their steadfastness under persecution
 - To correct their misunderstanding about the imminence of the Lord's return
 - To instruct the congregation on what disciplinary action to take toward those who refused to work
- 7) What has been suggested as the theme of this epistle?
- Steadfastness while waiting for the coming of Christ
- 8) What are the key verses of this epistle - 2Th 2:15-17
- 9) According to the outline above, what are the three main sections of this epistle?
- Encouragement in persecutions (chapter 1)
 - Enlightenment about the coming of the Lord (chapter 2)
 - Exhortations to Christian living (chapter 3)



Acropolis, and the famous Parthenon in Athens

Paul's Missions to Achaia and Corinth

The city of Athens was one of the wonders of the ancient world. In its golden age, the fifth century B.C., it had probably held within its walls more literary genius, more philosophical brilliance, and more architectural beauty than any other city of antiquity. In the time of Paul its political and commercial importance had declined greatly, but a faint aura of intellectuality and of culture still hung over it. The people of Athens were deeply conscious of their heritage and they prided themselves on their past. Many of the finest buildings of Athens' heyday, such as the Erechtheum and the Parthenon, were still intact. The intellectual atmosphere of the city preserved the philosophical tradition, and if the teachers who frequented the porticoes and street corners lacked the creative genius of Plato and Aristotle, they had at least an appreciation of the thinkers of the past that could not be duplicated readily elsewhere.

While Paul was awaiting at Athens the arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia, he gave himself as usual to the ministry. Two spheres of activity were open to him: the synagogue, where he met the usual congregation of Jews and proselytes, and the marketplace, where he encountered the pagan thinkers.



The Theseum to the west of the Agora (marketplace), is the best preserved Greek temple in the world.

Here he met a new type of opponent, the educated and cynical pagan, who was ready to hear anything but not ready to believe it. Luke devoted considerable space to the singular clash of the Jewish Christian Paul, whose passionate hatred of idolatry collided with the sceptical tolerance of pagans who might not take their own gods seriously, but who would not take his message seriously either.

Paul's preaching intrigued their curiosity and they took him to the Areopagus for a hearing. Literally, the Areopagus was Mars' Hill, a small rocky elevation in Athens where there was an area large enough for a public conference. Ramsay contends with some show of reason that *Areopagus* here means not so much the place as the group that took its name from the place, the governing council of the city that controlled educational policies and passed on the licensing of foreign teachers. There is no indication that he was on trial because a charge had been made against him. He was simply making an official statement of the chief tenets of his teaching.

The speech itself (17:22-31) was a masterpiece of condensation. Beginning with the point of contact furnished by the lavish display of architecture and statuary that

adorned the city, most of which was dedicated to the worship of the gods, he made a plea for the one God who made the heavens and the earth and who governs the destinies of men. In contrast to the vague absentee deity of Epicureanism he spoke of God as immanent; in contrast to the pantheistic *Logos* of Stoicism he emphasized God's personality and the necessity for repentance, which was the opposite of Stoic fatalism. For most Greeks, Paul's reference to resurrection was untenable. They considered the body inferior to the soul, and in the words of the poet Aeschylus, "Once a man dies and the earth drinks up his blood, there is no resurrection." Following his speech, interrupted as it was by his hearers (v. 32), there were some, though few, converts. Among them was a member of the court of the Areopagus, one Dionysius, along with a woman named Damaris, "and others with them" (v. 34).



The Erechtheum with its famous Porch of the Maidens on the Acropolis

Apparently the ministry in Athens was a disappointment to Paul. He created no great stir in the synagogue, and the pagan population dismissed him with ridicule. He was accustomed to being thrown out of town, but he was not used to being subjected to contemptuous indifference. Evidently it cut deeply into him, for he wrote to the Corinthians concerning his arrival among them after leaving Athens: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Cor. 2:3). Possibly this timorous attitude had physical causes, but it seems more likely that

the unusual dismissal Athens gave him unnerved him and caused him to rethink his whole procedure in apologetics.



The remains of the ancient Agora and of the old city of Corinth, Greece, with the Acrocorinthus in the background.

Corinth

From Athens Paul went to Corinth, a city of totally different character. The city had been sacked and burned by the Romans in 146 B.C. In 46 B.C. it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar and became the acknowledged political capital of Achaia, which was a senatorial province. Corinth was the residence of the governing proconsul, as Acts 18:12 states.

Located in the isthmus that connected the Peloponnesus to the mainland, between the Gulf of Lechaëum on the west and the Aegean Sea on the east, Corinth became a centre of trade. Rather than sailing around Cape Malea on the southern tip of the Peloponnesus, where navigation was dangerous, many shipmasters preferred to transship their cargoes at Corinth and to send them westward from Lechaëum to the Adriatic ports of Italy. Corinth, with its two seaports, Lechaëum on the west and Cenchrea on the east, enjoyed a monopoly of trade and rapidly grew wealthy.

In government it was a Roman colony like Philippi. Its population was cosmopolitan. The inhabitants had been killed or displaced when the city was first destroyed, and when it was rebuilt new elements settled there. Jews came

for the trade, Romans were there on official business or were descendants of the original colonists, Greeks gravitated toward the city from the countryside, and the commerce brought the usual miscellany of sailors, salesmen, bankers, and people from every corner of the Mediterranean world.

Rapid growth in wealth promoted a false culture. Corinth was a "boom town," offering luxury, display, sensuality, and sport. Morally, Corinthians were regarded as inferior even according to the loose standards of paganism. They were usually represented on the Roman stage as drunk. "To live as do the Corinthians" was a euphemism for the vilest kind of life. The temple of Aphrodite in Corinth at one time lodged one thousand priestesses who were professional prostitutes, and the ebb and flow of travel and commerce brought to the city a floating population that included the scum of the Mediterranean. Wealth and dire poverty, beauty and wretchedness, culture and squalor rubbed elbows at Corinth.

Since Paul had spent no great length of time at Athens, his arrival at Corinth may be dated in the fall of the same year that he left Macedonia. The administration of Gallio before whom he was tried probably began with the opening of the proconsular year in July of A.D. 52. Paul's total stay in Corinth was a year and a half (18:11), but how much of that preceded his trial and how much of it followed is uncertain. Luke says that after Gallio dismissed his case he remained in the city for "many days" (18:18). Perhaps the most acceptable dating would bring him to Corinth in the fall of A.D. 51, and would place his departure from the city in the early spring of A.D. 53.

As already noted, the scorn with which his message was greeted at Athens brought him to Corinth in a depressed frame of mind. His col-leagues had not returned from Macedonia, and his funds were probably running short. When he reached Corinth, he found employment at his old trade of tent-making with Aquila and Priscilla, who had been expelled from Rome by the edict of Claudius. Whether they were converts to Christianity before they came to Corinth, or whether they became be-lievers through contact with Paul is not known. In any case, he found shelter, employment, and fellowship with them.

In a short time Silas and Timothy returned from Macedonia, bringing the news of the growth of the churches. At this time the contribution to Paul's support of which he spoke in the Philippian letter may have come:

. . . when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.

(Phil. 4:15-16)

This passage implies that the Macedonian churches gave more generously after he left. Encouraged by the Good tidings and by the support from Macedonia, he preached more vigorously and more definitely that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:5).

The reaction in the synagogue was such that Paul withdrew, vowing that he would leave them to their unbelief and go to the Gentiles. He quit the synagogue, transferring his headquarters to the home of a proselyte, Titus Justus, who lived nearby. The ruler of the synagogue became a believer, and many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized.

Paul's ministry in Corinth at this time seems to have been under considerable strain. He was reorganizing his missionary procedure, for he said in I Corinthians that he "came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming . . . the testimony of God" (I Cor. 2:1). He could not recall exactly how many he baptized (1:16). The eighteen months of pioneering in this corrupt and idolatrous city must have taken a heavy toll of his physical and nervous strength. It may be that his return from Achaia to Palestine was occasioned by illness, though Luke says nothing of it.

In company with Aquila and Priscilla, Paul left Corinth and set out for the east. They stopped at Ephesus en route, where Aquila and Priscilla took up new headquarters and began their ministry. Paul preached in the synagogue, but only for a short time since he was desirous of reaching Palestine quickly.

No details are given of his journey, and there is only the barest mention of his arrival at his destination. He landed in Caesarea, greeted "the church" (Acts 18:22), whether at Caesarea or at Jerusalem is not clear, and then proceeded to Antioch—his last visit to the church that had originally commissioned him. Probably the eastern part of the journey consumed most of the summer, so that by the fall of A.D. 53 he was once again on the road westward (18:22-23).

Late summer and early fall may have been spent in the tour of Galatia and Phrygia. The disturbance in the Galatian churches that began at the time of the Council (A. D. 48 or 49) may not have died down completely, so that Paul had to "establish" the disciples. Before winter set in, Paul was back at Ephesus where he began his mission in Asia; it was the longest and perhaps the stormiest ministry of his experience.

Paul's Mission to Asia (Ephesus)

The city of Ephesus was one of the oldest of the settlements on the west coast of Asia Minor and the leading city of the Roman province of Asia. Its origin is

shrouded in antiquity, but it was a prominent settlement in the eighth century B. C. and was taken over by the Greeks at an early date. It was located about three miles from the sea on the Cayster River, which at that time was navigable, so that Ephesus was a seaport. The valley of the Cayster penetrated far inland, making a caravan route to the East. Roads from Ephesus communicated with all the other large cities of the province and with the lines of commerce that connected with the north and east. It was a strategic point for evangelism, since workers from Ephesus could maintain contact with the whole Asian hinterland.

The outstanding feature of Ephesus was its great temple of Artemis, a local deity who was later identified with Artemis of the Greeks and with Diana of the Romans. Her image was a many-breasted figure with a female face, having a solid block of stone instead of legs. The first temple was probably begun in the sixth century B.C., but was not finished until 400 B.C. It was burned to the ground in 356 B.C. and replaced by a newer and larger structure, four hundred twenty-five feet by two hundred twenty feet, which was subsidized by contributions from all of Asia. It was considered one of the wonders of the world and was an outstanding centre for pilgrims who came to worship at its shrine.



The Agora at Ephesus

Not only was the temple a centre for religious worship, but because its halls and grounds were regarded as sacred and inviolable, it also became an asylum for the oppressed and a depository for funds.

A crude picture of the temple appeared on Ephesian coins, accompanied by the very title that is used in Acts for the city, NEOKOROS, or "temple-sweeper" of Artemis (19:35). Unlike most of the people, who were caught up in the routine state worship, the inhabitants of Asia and of Ephesus in particular exhibited an almost fanatical devotion to Artemis. Its intensity appeared in the action of the mob in the amphitheatre, which for two hours shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesian" (19:34).

Ephesus was rated a free city and maintained its own government. The ultimate authority lay in the popular assembly when legally convoked (19:39), while the leaders or senate of the city acted as the centre! legislative body. The secretary or "town clerk" was the responsible official: he was entrusted with keeping records and with presenting business to the assembly (19:35). The influence of labor was also strong, for it was the guild of silversmiths who protested that Paul's evangelizing activities had imperilled their trade in religious souvenirs, the silver shrines that were miniature copies of the temple.

Paul encountered several important problems in Ephesus. The first was the question of the survival of the teaching of John the Baptist, whose disciples were still active after John's life had closed. Apollos, an educated Alexandrian Jew, had already been preaching in Ephesus concerning Jesus, "knowing only the baptism of John" (18:24-25). Undoubtedly he knew that the Messiah was coming, that he had already been anointed to serve God, and that preparation for his ministry must include repentance and faith. His knowledge was not so much false as partial; he had not gone far enough. He was preaching in the synagogues and apparently evoked some response.

Under the tutelage of Priscilla and Aquila his understanding was broadened. A contrast of phrases here is enlightening: Luke says that he "had been instructed in the way of the Lord" (18:25), but that "Priscilla and Aquila . . . expounded unto him the way of God *more accurately*" (18:26, italics ours). Leaving Ephesus with the recommendation of the believers there, he went over to Achaia and became a strong apologist for the Christian faith, especially among the Jews (18:28). Later he became one of Paul's trusted friends and colleagues (I Cor. 16:12; Titus 3:13).

Apollos departed from Ephesus before Paul arrived, but others like him were there. These men, disciples of John the Baptist, were deficient in personal spiritual experience. So obvious was this fact that when Paul came into contact with them, he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when

they believed. Their answer was that they had not so much as heard whether the Holy Spirit had come. In view of John's prediction that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, it seems inconceivable that they had never heard his name; but they might never have heard of the fulfilment of the promise at Pentecost. The reply of Paul proved that the baptism of John was insufficient to produce a full Christian experience, for the believer must not only repent of sin, but also be filled with the Spirit. The first problem at Ephesus, then, was to bring sincere but immature believers up to date.

A second important problem of the Asian mission was the occult. The Jewish exorcists represented by the seven sons of Sceva, and the hundreds of nameless persons who burned their books of magic are proof of the wide extent to which superstition and demonology prevailed. The answer to this problem was twofold. On the positive side, the power of Christ was demonstrated to be greater than that of the exorcists and demon cults. The sick were healed, the obsessed were delivered, and those who practiced the occult arts were so convicted of the evil of their ways that they voluntarily destroyed the books of magic on which they had relied (Acts 19:19). On the negative side, the exclusive character of the gospel was demonstrated. A Christian did not *add* his Christianity to his other religions; he discarded them. Christianity was essentially intolerant of all rivals, and nowhere is this principle better demonstrated than at Ephesus.

The ministry of Paul in Ephesus was singularly effective. For more than two years (19:8, 10) he was able to preach unhindered, first in the synagogue and later in the school of Tyrannus (19:9). He performed special miracles (19:11) and reached the populace of Ephesus and the province as a whole more thoroughly than he did the people of any other place. Luke notes that "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (19:10), that "mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" (19:20), and that so many had believed that idolatry suffered economic loss (19:26-27). The church at Ephesus became a missionary centre and was for centuries one of the strongholds of Christianity in Asia Minor.

The End Times in I and 2 Thessalonians

Prophecy in Quick Review

There are basically two aspects when studying the Prophetic texts of Scripture. First, there is the text itself, and what they convey about an event. The second aspect has to deal with the timing of said events.

Most Pre-Tribulation believers have no issue with the first part, but the second part usually tends to stump even the best of us. Even the most gifted among us will be the first to admit, there is still a lot about the end times that we don't know.

Let me expound on some thoughts from "The Rapture Window".

1. There is a plan and an appointed time for the Rapture to happen. It might be imminent to us, because we are not God, but the event itself is no surprise to God.

a. In the military, if you keep your plans to yourself, you keep that information, 'close-hold' and that is what our God, the master strategist, is doing. He hides His plans in plain sight, but it takes the Holy Spirit to 'reveal' the plan in the Word, which is why Satan can never figure it out.

2. God causes the strong delusion to happen to those who have rejected God's free gift of Salvation. He does not cause the strong delusion to happen to those who are ignorant of this Salvation.

a. Similar to the 'blindness' that Satan uses on in the people of this age, God will presumably, allow that blindness to become a permanent sealing, in the Tribulation.

3. The scoffers only come out after something is brought to light, not before. The return of Christ was veiled to man for around 14 centuries so the subject was almost a non-issue. Once it came back to the forefront of discussion, also came those who would mock it, including those within Christendom.

4. The last two letters written to the final two churches in Revelation 2-3, are Philadelphia (remnant believers) and Laodicea (lukewarm and apostate) church. We can see that happening today as the increasing pressure on believers is to depart from the faith.

Paul wrote thirteen epistles, of which, three have duplicates (Timothy, Thessalonians, and Corinthians), which means there were ten epistles to ten different audiences. Of that ten, three were personal, (Timothy, Philemon, and Titus), which leaves seven letters to seven churches.

a. Jesus had seven parables in Matthew 13, of which, can be overlaid over **His** seven letters in Revelation 2-3. Along with Paul's, they portray the progression of the Church in its various stages.

b. To Philadelphia, we can link the Pearl of Great Price, and Thessalonians, where the Doctrine of the Rapture is first unveiled.

c. To Laodicea, we can link the parable of the Dragnet, and Paul's letter to the Colossians. Notice the 'casting' out, is similar to the vomiting out.

Here is what we don't see

- We don't see a great Western power that resembles in any way, the United States in the last days. Which begs the question, what happens to us and when?
- We don't see events lined up chronologically, except for in Revelation. But that doesn't tell us when a Psalm 83, Isaiah 17, or Ezekiel 38-39 war will occur.
- We don't see the Church beyond Revelation 3:22 until the very end in Revelation 19, when she returns with Christ in the air.
- We don't know how much time transpires between the Rapture and the start of the tribulation*

Here is what we know

I think part of the reason that Jack Kinsella¹ was such a great writer and teacher of the Prophetic word, was because of the time he spent in law enforcement. Biblical eschatology, like the scene of a crime, is prone to leaving clues around...and this world is one gigantic crime-scene. A good detective or investigator arrives to the scene of the crime, and then takes it in as a whole and first looks for things that seem out of place.

1. We know that of that day and hour (speaking of the Rapture), no man knows. But Paul did say we were sons of the light, and of the day, and in that

¹ Jack (John) Kinsell, electronic journalist on biblical subjects and prophecy, died Thursday, March 14, 2013.

light, we would recognize the season so as not to be caught 'unawares'. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

2. Although there were those who were anticipating the arrival of the Messiah, the only people who knew the **when** of the arrival of the 'One born King of the Jews', were the Wise men from the east (Magi). They presumably learned this from their predecessors who got it from the Prophet Daniel. So the Gentiles believed and followed the sign to Joseph and Mary's house (not a manger anymore), and the religious leaders of the day, who should have known the season, never even bothered to investigate it. (Matthew 2:1-12)

3. We know that the Rapture is an appointed time. Nothing is happenstance to God. (Isaiah 46:9-10) The time of the Rapture is not based on an event or blood-moon, but based on a set number of Gentiles that will be brought into the Church to make up the Bride of Christ. (Rom 11:25)

4. We know that the Rapture and the Second Coming are NOT the same event.

5. We know that according to Daniel, that after the Rapture, there is at least seven years (360 day years) remaining on God's prophetic calendar.*

6. This time has come to be known as 'The Tribulation' because it will be a time when God pours out at least 21 Judgments on the earth and those who are left to inhabit it. But it also called the 'time of Jacob's trouble' and 'the Day of the Lord' in the Old Testament, and serves two primary purposes: discipline Israel, and utterly destroy the gentile kingdoms of the world. It mentions the last half of those 7 years or the last 3 ½ years as: times, time, and half a time, 42 months, or 1260 days.

7. We know at some future point, there is at least one war (prior to Armageddon) which is where the Gog and Magog coalition come against Israel. (Ezekiel 38-39). This war could be preceded by or in conjunction with a Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17 event(s).

8. We know at the end of that time, Christ will return at the 2nd Coming to defeat the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and Satan (as well as the armies of the world) at Armageddon ushering in the 'sheep and goat' judgment and Christ's millennial reign. (Matthew 25, Revelation 20)

History's Not Finished

Just because God has seven years remaining for Israel, doesn't mean that there is only seven years left in total. Let me quantify that for a second. 2 Chronicles 36:20-21

The Bible contains four such periods in Israel's history. Each one was actually longer than 490 years, but some scholars believe that for various reasons God didn't count some of the time in each of the periods. I won't go into all the details here, but the four periods are, 1) Abraham to the Exodus, 2) the Exodus to the First Temple, 3) the First Temple to the edict of Artaxerxes and 4) the edict of Artaxerxes to the 2nd Coming.

The 490 year period during which the Israelites failed to keep the Sabbath for the Land and incurred a 70 year penalty in Babylon was the third one. It ended when Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-9). The King's edict also began the count on the fourth period (known as Daniel's 70 weeks) which is the one we're in now (Daniel 9:24-27).

So Israel was brought up to that final 483rd year (of the 490 year windows) with their Messiah hanging on the cross. He was cut off and Israel's prophetic clock stopped. None of the events in Daniel 9:27 (or that final week) were completed within the following 40 years after the cross and till the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Jew's 1,878 year Diaspora began when the Roman's sacked Jerusalem and their temple in 70AD. It wasn't General Titus's intent to destroy the Temple, but because Caesar Vespasian (former General and Titus's father) left three legions behind (full of Arabs and Syrians) who hated the Jews; you can see why the Temple was destroyed. (Tacitus, Book 5, 1.) In 130-135AD, the Jews revolted against Emperor Hadrian in the Bar Kokhba Revolt, but ultimately lost everything and were scattered to the four winds. From the 8th century until today, the Al Aqsa Mosque (Dome of the Rock) has sat atop the Temple Mount and has acted as a stalwart reason why they couldn't rebuild there.

The first two periods of 490 years, pre-dated and led up to the creation of King Solomon's Temple. The second two periods of 490 years include the Jewish Temple, and this is why Jesus, after pointing out that the Temple would be destroyed (Matt. 23:37-24:2), then points to a future temple in which an "Abomination of Desolation" would occur. (Matt 24:15) The "Abomination of Desolation" then acts as a prophetic fulcrum, balancing the first 3 ½ years of the

70th week of Daniel, with the last 3 ½ years. The Apostle Paul reiterates this idea in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 in that this man of lawlessness will set himself up in a future temple proclaiming himself to be God.

At no point in Israel's history from the time of Abraham till today has there ever been unaccounted time. But the only time that seems to matter, or count towards the prophetic clock, is when they are in a covenant relationship with God...which today they are not, nor were they after Christ's crucifixion. From 1948 until today seems to be in keeping with the 75 year period between the birth of Abraham and the promise that was given to him by God.

Seeing that we are at 65 years since the rebirth of Israel, it would seem that the fullness of the Gentiles occurs during the 75 year window from 1948. This is supported by:

- Abraham was 75 years old when he received the promise from God. (Genesis 12:4)
- Jesus said that 'that generation would not pass away' until all these things are complete. (Matthew 24:32-34)
- The length of a generation varies, but Moses said that men would typically live between 70-80 years (Psalm 90:10), then we are cut off (die) and 'fly away'.
- There are seven billion people alive today, seven being the number of completeness—or fullness.

After the Rapture

We can know that the Rapture is near, because we are already seeing the things necessary for the Tribulation to occur, such as: technological advancements in computers, communications, weapons of mass destruction, and the national alignments such as the European Union, Mediterranean Union (Revived Roman Empire), Magog alliance (Russia/Iran/Turkey), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Kings of the East). Furthermore, it would seem that all the "Tribulation" events are triggered by the Rapture. We know that:

- The Rapture has to occur before the Antichrist (man of lawlessness) can be revealed. (2 Thessalonians 2:7) This confirms the order of events from Revelation 3:22-4:2.
- The Antichrist is revealed in the first Judgment (Seal 1, rider on the white horse)
- The Antichrist can't rise to power until he is revealed, or he is revealed in the process of rising to power.

- The Antichrist declares himself to be God in the Temple of God (Abomination of Desolation). (2 Thessalonians 2:4)
- The “Abomination of Desolation” can’t occur, until there is a Temple rebuilt that has a ‘Holy of Holies’.

So if all these things have to be completed before a generation passes away (70-80 years), then the Rapture would have to happen at least two-three years before the Tribulation would begin in earnest, which will be addressed in next week’s article. Until then...

1 Thessalonians Chapters 1 to 3

It is important to understand the differences between Jewish and Christian Eschatology. Israel was promised that one day God would return to dwell with them forever in the land He had given them (**Ezekiel 43:7**). The Church was promised that we would go to heaven to dwell with our Lord Jesus forever. (**John 14:1-3**) Because the Bible can’t contradict itself both promises have to come true.

There’s Something Different Here

Just as the Olivet Discourse is focused on the 2nd coming, Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians reference the 2nd coming in each chapter, for an average of once every 13 verses. The difference is that Paul’s letters feature an event that doesn’t appear anywhere in the Olivet Discourse, the Rapture of the Church. It was the first public disclosure of an incredible secret God had kept to Himself since the very beginning of time, and it’s this difference that enables both Jewish and Gentile eschatology to come true.

The Thessalonian letters were Paul’s very first, written in 51 and 52 AD from Corinth. Paul had spent only 3 weeks in Thessalonica, since his teaching there had caused a riot soon after his arrival. A group of malcontents, hired for the purpose, stirred up the crowds by publicly accusing Paul of preaching against Caesar. One thing led to another and Paul had to leave under cover of darkness (**Acts 17:1-10**).

But in that 3 weeks Paul had taught believers there the doctrines of salvation and sanctification, the Trinity, the nature of man, the assurance of pardon and of course, the End Times. His two letters were meant to under gird these teachings and to answer questions the Thessalonians had raised about the Day of the Lord. In this commentary we’ll focus primarily on his answers to their

prophecy questions.

Let's Get Started

Paul's first hint that the Church will be rescued from the End Times judgments, called the Great Tribulation by the Lord, (**Matt. 24:21**) comes in the very first chapter of the letter and illustrates another major difference between Jewish and Christian eschatology. Christians may argue over the timing of our rescue but at least we're promised one. In the Olivet Discourse the most the Lord could say to Israel is that for the sake of His elect He would put a stop to things before they destroyed every last person on the planet. (**Matt.24:22**).

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (1 Thes. 1:7-10)

By using the Greek word **apo** in the phrase translated *rescues us from the coming wrath*, Paul selected a preposition that literally means “to keep away from the time, place or any relation to” the Great Tribulation. (Please remember “the wrath” arrives on Earth in **Rev. 6:16-17**, well before the Great Tribulation officially begins.)

As I've stated before, the Great Tribulation (called the Time of Jacob's Troubles in the Old Testament) serves two purposes:

1. to completely destroy all the nations among which the Jews have been scattered, and
2. to discipline Israel in preparation for the Lord's return (**Jere. 30:1-11**).

The Church, having been purified at the cross, has no business there and here's the first of several promises Paul makes that we won't be.

Where Did He Come From?

Paul had come to Thessalonica from Philippi where he had been mistreated in a most humiliating way. Having been dragged before the magistrates for exorcising a demon from a slave girl, and then beaten and imprisoned without trial in violation of Roman law, he was finally released and sent out of town.

But though his time in Thessalonica was also cut short, his preaching there had been joyfully received and its impact on the Thessalonians was a witness to congregations all around.

Thessalonica was the capitol of Macedonia with about 200,000 residents. It was located at the strategic intersection of the Via Egnatia, the major east-west thoroughfare through Greece, and the north-south highway that led to the Danube and Eastern Europe. As a result travelers from all over the region passed through and felt the influence of the new Christian community there. For this reason Paul felt a special bond with them.

“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy” (1 Thes. 2:19-20).

Though he couldn’t return to Thessalonica himself, Paul had sent Timothy to find out how they were doing, and in his letter told them how encouraged he was by Timothy’s favourable report.

“How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?” He asked. “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” (1 Thes. 3:9,13)

Here’s another clue as to what’s in store for the Church and when it’ll happen. Paul’s prayer that they would all be in the presence of our God and Father when it was time for the Lord Jesus to return is a clear hint that the church will be removed from Earth and taken to Heaven sometime prior to the 2nd coming.

And so in the first three chapters of the letter, Paul has referenced the 2nd coming three times, two of which also give clear indication that the Church will be rescued from the time, place, and any relation to the judgments that precede it. All of this is leading up to his blockbuster announcement of the Rapture of the Church, which we’ll cover in our next installment.

I Thessalonians

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

We have begun reviewing and commenting Paul's letters to the Thessalonians and have found that these letters contain the Lord's first official announcement of the Rapture of the church. We've seen several hints already but now in chapter 4 Paul brings this almost inconceivable blessing into the open for all to marvel at.

Remember, Paul used these letters to underscore his teaching on the End Times and to answer their questions about prophecy. And now in chapter 4 we get to their primary concern, their uncertainty about the disposition of believers who die before the Lord returns. Somehow Christians in Thessalonica had come to believe that only those alive at the Lord's return would qualify for the blessings of the Kingdom. Those unfortunate enough to have died before the 2nd coming would miss out on everything, they feared, perhaps even their salvation. Paul put their minds to rest.

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope, " He said. " We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."

And then he laid it on them.

"According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." (1 Thes. 4:13-18)

Contained In The Old, Explained In The New

Scholars search the Gospels in vain for the words from the Lord that Paul claims to be quoting here because they're looking in the wrong place. The Lord's promise is found not among the words of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, but in a passage from Isaiah.

“But your dead will live;” Isaiah said, “Their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.”

“Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer.” (Isa. 26:19-21)

Here in the Book of Isaiah lies the clearest prophecy of a pre-trib rapture of any, although I’ll grant you that without already knowing about the rapture you might not see it. But that’s the way of God, isn’t it, to hide things in plain sight? It’s part of His secret wisdom (**1 Cor. 2:7**) (With tongue planted firmly in cheek, I’ve always maintained that the only 100% sure way of interpreting prophecy is to wait till a passage is fulfilled, and then say, “Oh, so that’s what that means.”)

Read the Isaiah passage carefully and you’ll see it previews Paul’s disclosure to the last detail. First comes the resurrection of the saved dead, and then the disappearance of the living. In Hebrew, the word translated **go** in verse 20 has several meanings (including come) and my favorite, **vanish**. And to where do we vanish? Into the rooms prepared for us in His Father’s house, Jesus said. (**John 14:1-3**) And when do we do this? Sometime before the Lord comes out of His dwelling to punish the people of Earth for their sins. It seems clear. Before the Great Tribulation begins, the Lord’s people will vanish into our “mansions in the sky” and stay there until it ends.

(Notice how Isaiah speaks in the 2nd person to **us** about **our** resurrection and rapture, but in the 3rd person about the people of Earth and the Lord punishing **them** for **their** sins? Like Paul, he’s removing us from the time, the place and any relation to the Great Tribulation.)

Come Up Here!

And so one day soon without any prior warning at all, you’ll suddenly hear a loud voice calling your name and commanding you to “Come up here!” just as it was with John in **Revelation 4:1** (another preview of the Rapture). As the trumpet blows you’ll be shot across the dimensions of space and time as if on a rocket, and before you can even blink an eye, your mortal body will become immortal, all your imperfections gone, and you’ll find yourself standing in Heaven in the presence of the Lord, never again to leave Him. Hallelujah!

And so Paul revealed, for the very first time, the incredible news of the secret event we now call the Rapture. And just as it would have been with us, Paul knew their next question would have to do with the timing of the event. Heading them off, he wrote:

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

“But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.” (1 Thes. 5:1-5)

As Daniel had foretold, (**Daniel 8:23-25**) Paul confirmed that the antichrist will initially appear as a man of peace before bringing astounding devastation to the Earth. His antics will catch the world off guard, and they’ll think the great era of Peace on Earth has finally arrived.

But here’s another case where you need to pay careful attention to the pronouns Paul used to see who he’s talking about. He starts out using the 3rd person (them & they) to indicate who’s being surprised, then switches to the 2nd person (you) and finally to the 1st person (we) to say that believers should know what’s coming and when and therefore should not be surprised.

Once again the church is being separated from the world, this time in terms of awareness. We have the Word of God, Who knows and tells us the end from the beginning. We should not be caught by surprise as events signal the nearness of the End of the Age. We’ve been told what to look for, and as Jesus warned His disciples, *“When all these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near.”* (**Luke 21:28**) Though we won’t know the day or hour, we are admonished to know the times and seasons. And as the signs we see tell us that the end is drawing near we’re told to watch and wait.

Watch And Wait

In researching the literal meanings of those two words, I found that watch implies expectation and wait implies belief. I get a mental image of a person at a bus stop. Having decided where he’s going and being familiar with the schedule, he gets there close to his bus’s arrival time, watching with expectation because

he knows it's coming soon, and waiting with the belief that when it arrives it'll take him to his destination.

So it is with us where the rapture is concerned. Having read the prophecies and knowing that the time is near, we watch with expectation because we know He's coming soon, and we wait with the belief that when He arrives He'll take us to our destination.

Unlike others who are asleep, we're alert and self-controlled.

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep (alive or dead), we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thes. 5:9-11)

In saying this, he offered another hint like the ones in **1 Thes 1:10** and **1 Thes 3:13** that the Rapture of the Church would precede the Great Tribulation.

Before we go on, let's address the claim being made by some that verse 9 is not about the end times but is simply a promise that if we are saved we'll go to heaven instead of having to endure the eternal suffering reserved for unbelievers.

In **1 Thes 1:10** Paul indicated that Jesus will rescue us from the coming wrath. The Greek word translated from refers to both the time and place of the coming wrath and denotes a physical separation. If you believe the letter has significance beyond the Thessalonian Church and is meant for the Church in general, then the only wrath that the entire Church can be rescued from both the time and place of is the Wrath of God at the end of the age.

The same is true in **1 Thes 5:9-10** where the context is clearly the Day of the Lord (**1 Thes. 5:1-2**). Therefore we can logically conclude that the wrath Paul was speaking about in both places is the wrath of God associated with the Day of the Lord.

Bringing his letter to a close, Paul encouraged them to

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

“Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (1 Thes. 5:16-28)

Our God, Who has called us, will sanctify us and keep our whole spirit, soul and body blameless at the Lord’s coming. He is faithful and He will do it!

2 Thessalonians

Between the two letters we call 1st and 2nd Thessalonians something happened that nearly scared the recipients right out of their socks! They received a letter that appeared to be from Paul but was in fact a forgery. Confused and frightened, they dashed off a hurried request for clarification since this new letter contradicted what he had taught them.

“God is just,” Paul responded, “He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.” (2 Thes. 1:6-10)

Explaining that someone had obviously played a mean trick on them and that the Lord would punish whoever it was for it, he then chided them for being so easily taken in.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. (2 Thes.2:1-2)

Here we get an extraordinary insight into the sequence of End Times events that Paul had taught them. Receiving word that the Day of the Lord had come would have upset them only if they’d been led to believe that the Rapture of the Church would precede the Great Tribulation. Think about it. From any other view, this

kind of news would have been greeted with a certain amount of joyous anticipation. Sure the next few years would really be rough, but whether by martyrdom or survival they would soon be in the presence of the Lord forever. But from the pre-trib perspective, hearing that the Day of the Lord had come would be horrifying, because it would mean that they had missed the rapture. And that would mean that they weren't saved. No wonder they wrote Paul for clarification!

It's important to understand that they had asked Paul two questions. The first concerned the Day of the Lord (Day of Christ) and the second was about our being gathered to Him, the Rapture. These are two separate events. Paul answered the 2 questions in that order using verses 3-5 to describe conditions that would bring about the Day of the Lord and verses 6-8 to explain when the rapture would occur in relation to them.

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? (2 Thes. 2:3-5)

Confirming and amplifying Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy (**Daniel 9:27**) and the Lord's own words in the Olivet Discourse (**Matt. 24:15**), Paul pegged the beginning of the Great Tribulation to the moment the antichrist stands in the Temple in Jerusalem proclaiming himself to be God.

And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2 Thes. 2:6-8)

Before the antichrist can be officially revealed, One who is currently limiting the power of lawlessness has to be taken out of the way. The phrase "out of the way" literally means out of the midst, or from amongst. Some force that restrains (literally: holds back, or hinders) the power of evil within certain predetermined limits (for this power is already evident on Earth) has to be removed.

Scholars who read the passage literally identify this force as the Holy Spirit. And since the Holy Spirit is sealed within us, if He's taken out from amongst the people of Earth, we have to go too. You can't take the Restraint without taking the container, as someone has said. This is the Rapture of the Church, and once we're gone the power of evil will be free from restraint and all Hell will break loose on Earth. God will respond by pouring out the full measure of His wrath against the anti-Christ and his followers (**Rev. 6-18**). Paul confirmed this sequence in **Romans 5:9**, **1 Thes. 1:10**, and **1 Thes 5:9** saying we would be rescued from the time of God's wrath because we are not appointed to suffer wrath.

Here then is the sequence. Before the Day of the Lord can come, the antichrist has to be revealed, and before he can be revealed the church has to be raptured. So according to Paul the next prophetic event concerning believers will be our own disappearance. No prior notice, no precedent condition to fulfill; a clear presentation of the Doctrine of Imminence. (We're primarily interested in prophetic events concerning Israel and the End times to try and judge how close we are to our own next event.)

Now, just to further inform them, Paul added detail to the antichrist's revealing.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (2 Thes 2:9-12)

Nicodemus once said that he believed Jesus was the Messiah because no one could perform miracles such as His unless God was with him. (**John 3:2**) In a sense he was right. No one in Israel had ever seen sight given to a man born blind, for example. (**John 10:32-33**) But don't believe in Jesus because of His miracles. As the passage above makes clear, miracles can be used to deceive people. Believe in Jesus because every important detail about Him was foretold in prophecy before being fulfilled in His life.

It's important to note that the reason people will perish in those days is not because they never heard the truth. No, they'll perish because they refused to embrace it. Having hardened their hearts against the truth of the Gospel, they'll be fair game for the lies of the devil. And as He often does the Lord will actually orchestrate events so that those who've rejected Him can experience the full

consequences of their choices. There will be no gray area, no middle ground to hide in. The power of evil will be free to deceive people in ways we haven't even begun to imagine.

According to tradition, Paul had poor eyesight. Some think it was a consequence of being struck blind on the Damascus Road, while others blame a disease he contracted. To make his life easier and his letters more legible, he often dictated them to an assistant who wrote them down. One consequence of this was that it made the earlier forgery easier to pull off. To make sure the Thessalonians knew this letter was authentic and not another forgery, after some closing instructions on living the Victorious Christian Life, he signed it with his own hand.

And so in these two letters Paul showed the church what's going to happen to us in the latter days, allowing us to add these things to the Lord's briefing to Israel in **Matt. 24** for a complete picture of End Times events. Also, for the first time it could now be clearly demonstrated how the Lord would fulfill His promises to Israel AND the Church.

Sometime before the antichrist is revealed, triggering The Great Tribulation, the Lord will make a surprise visit here and secretly whisk the Church off to Heaven to be hidden from this awful time. After He's defeated His enemies He'll complete His promised 2nd Coming to begin His Millennial reign, bringing us back with Him. He'll make Israel the world's pre-imminent nation once again, capital of His Kingdom and center of world government (**Isaiah 2:1-5**). And as God returns to dwell in the Temple there, the Church will inhabit the New Jerusalem in fulfillment of all that's been promised both groups.

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. (Isaiah 46:9-10) If you listen closely, you can almost hear the footsteps of the Messiah.

2 Thessalonians 2 and the Rapture – A Question

Question

Maybe you can answer a question that has bugged me for quite awhile. II thes 2 speaks of when the antichrist will be revealed. A few verses after it speaks of him being revealed AFTER the “one” who restrains is out of the way. My thinking on this is that the Holy Spirit is the restrainer and His being removed also refers to the Church being Raptured. Am I on the right track here? So when is he revealed? Before or after the rapture?

Answer.

Reading 2 Thessalonians 2 carefully tells us the order of End Times events. Verse 3 says that the Day of the Lord (Great Tribulation) can't come until the Anti-Christ is revealed and verse 7 says the anti-Christ can't be revealed until the restrainer (Holy Spirit) is taken out of the way. Since the Holy Spirit is sealed within the Church that means we have to be gone in the Rapture before the Anti-Christ can be revealed. Paul also confirmed what the Lord said in Matt. 24:15-21 that the anti-Christ will officially reveal himself by standing in the temple declaring that he's God. This is the Abomination of Desolation that begins the Great Tribulation.

I and 2 Thessalonians – Conclusion on Prophecy

By most accounts Paul stayed in Thessalonica for only about 3 weeks and during that time he founded a Church and taught them the doctrines of salvation and sanctification, the Trinity, the nature of man, the assurance of pardon, and the Day of the Lord. He continued teaching them after he left with his first letter, written from Corinth in 51 AD, in which he introduced the doctrine of the rapture (**1 Thes. 4:16-17**). Shortly after that they received another letter appearing to be from him, announcing that the Day of the Lord had come. They reacted with fear and confusion and immediately sought clarification.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus and our being gathered to Him, we ask you brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy report or letter supposed to have come from us saying that the Day of the Lord has already come. Don't let any one deceive you in any

way for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. (2 Thes 2:1-3)

From Paul's response it's clear the letter they were concerned about had been a forgery, sent by someone pretending to be him and designed to frighten them. It worked. The Greek words for unsettle and alarm literally mean to agitate, incite, and frighten. Something in the letter had contradicted their understanding of his teaching and they were upset. Reading **2 Thes 2:1-3** we see that the forgery must have disputed Paul's teaching on events leading up to the Day of the Lord. This is the only logical explanation for his 2nd letter to the Thessalonians.

Notice that right from the beginning Paul separated the coming of the Lord from our being gathered to Him. That's because they're two different events. We can't tell their relative timing from this, but we can tell they're not the same thing. The Second Coming is when He comes back down to Earth to be with His people here, while from **1 Thes. 4:16-17** we know the rapture has us going up to meet Him in the air and continuing to Heaven to be with Him there (**John 14:2-3**). The 2nd coming will be witnessed by everyone (**Matt. 24:30**), but the rapture is an instantaneous disappearance of believers only (**1 Cor. 15:51-52**) that happens without warning.

Everything That Was Written in the Past Was Written To Teach Us

The quote above is from **Romans 15:4**. It tells us that Paul wasn't just writing to the Thessalonian believers. He was also writing to us. Think about it. The Day of the Lord is a term that always refers to the End Times and most often to the Great Tribulation. If Paul had taught them to expect a post-tribulation rapture would they have been agitated and frightened upon receiving the forgery? No! It would more likely have made them think the 2nd coming was only a few years away and many of them would live to see it.

The only justification for their fear and confusion would be if Paul had taught them a pre-trib rapture. In that case a letter telling them the Day of the Lord had come would mean they had missed the rapture, and that would mean they weren't saved. Now we can see how they would be agitated, angry and afraid. Imagine how you would you feel in a situation like that.

From **2 Thes 2:1-3** we can begin to construct Paul's teaching on the chronology of events leading up to the Day of the Lord. Remember, there's an abundance of proof from his other letters showing that Paul taught the doctrine of eternal security, aka once saved always saved. Some of the most obvious references are **Romans 8:38-39**, **2 Cor 1:21-22**, **2 Cor. 5:5**, **Ephes. 1:13-14**, and **Ephes.**

4:30. In all of them Paul taught that true believers cannot fall away from faith for any reason. He said the Lord guaranteed our inheritance and sealed the Holy Spirit inside us as a deposit.

But Paul spoke of a rebellion (falling away) in **2 Thes 2:3** that would have to precede the Day of the Lord. The Greek word translated rebellion is apostasia, from which we get apostasy. It means people would abandon something they once considered themselves to be part of and the context implies that it's the church. You can't fall away from something unless you first think of yourself as being part of it. But true believers can't fall away at all. Therefore this rebellion or apostasy has to involve those who thought of themselves as being part of the church, but weren't really saved.

Don't be confused about this. We see believers-in-name-only leaving traditional churches to join the Emerging Church all around us, but rebellion is as much attitude as it is action and they don't think they're rebelling against God. They see themselves as still being in the Church. In fact they think they're the best part of it. Far from being rebellious, they call themselves followers of Christ, not just believers in him, and doers of the word, not just hearers. They're not sitting in Churches on Sunday listening to the same tired old messages on sin and salvation and coming forward to be born again. No. They're out there in the world, thinking they're changing it for Jesus.

These advocates of the so-called social gospel don't realize it's not what you do for the Lord that matters, it's what you believe He's done for you. The only work the Lord requires of us is that we believe in the one He sent (**John 6:29**). That means to believe God chose to send His Son to Earth to die for our sins so we can choose to live with Him in Eternity (**John 3:16**). The righteous work of a thousand lifetimes will not suffice in place of this belief.

When these believers-in-name-only discover the true Church has disappeared while they've been left behind, that's when they'll rebel against God and join the other side. By the time the anti-Christ makes his claim to deity, the whole world will follow him (**Rev. 13:8**) and they'll be right in the forefront.

The End Times According To Paul

He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thes. 2:4)

After the rapture and the falling away of believers-in-name-only into His world-wide counterfeit religion, the anti-Christ will be revealed for who he really is by

proclaiming himself to be God. Remember, the sequence Paul gave was first the apostasy, and then the man of lawlessness will be revealed.

For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming (2 Thes. 2:7-8).

Here Paul confirmed this sequence, saying a restrainer is currently holding things back. After the restrainer is taken out of the way the anti-Christ will be revealed. This restrainer is the Holy Spirit, sealed within the Church. After the rapture, the Holy Spirit will be out of the way, the rebellion will take place, and the anti-Christ will be revealed. These things can't happen until the church is gone.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (2 Thes. 2:9-12).

Most likely, the anti-Christ will already be known as a great statesman and leader, but by declaring himself to be God he'll be laying claim to Planet Earth. This claim will kick off the Great Tribulation (**Matt. 24:15-21**) and will be accompanied by all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders that will deceive those who have fallen away into thinking they have finally found the truth. But in reality they will have rejected the truth and embraced a lie. At the end of the Great Tribulation the Lord will return to overthrow the anti-Christ and destroy him by the splendour of His coming and those who believe the lie will perish as well.

In his letters to the Thessalonians Paul didn't reveal the actual timing of the Rapture except as it relates to other events. It may be one of the things he was forbidden to speak about (**2 Cor. 12:4**). All we know is for reasons of His own the Lord has never given us a specific date for the rapture. But by carefully studying passages describing it and maintaining the view that the Bible cannot contradict itself, the astute believer can obey the commandment to "know the times and seasons" and construct with some assurance the correct sequence of events. Paul criticized the Thessalonians for not figuring this out back then (**2**

Thes 2:5) and would even more strongly criticize the church today for the same reason.

Paul to Timothy 1 and 2 Letters

The Problems of the Early Constitutional Church

No single consecutive history is available that gives in written form the fortunes of the church from the close of the book of Acts to the end of the first century. Only the individual books of the canon, with such additional hints as may be gleaned from the writings of the early church fathers, can supply any knowledge of events in this period. The uncertainty of placing exactly the dates and places of origin of these writings adds to the problem, so that a consistent picture of this era is almost impossible to reconstruct.

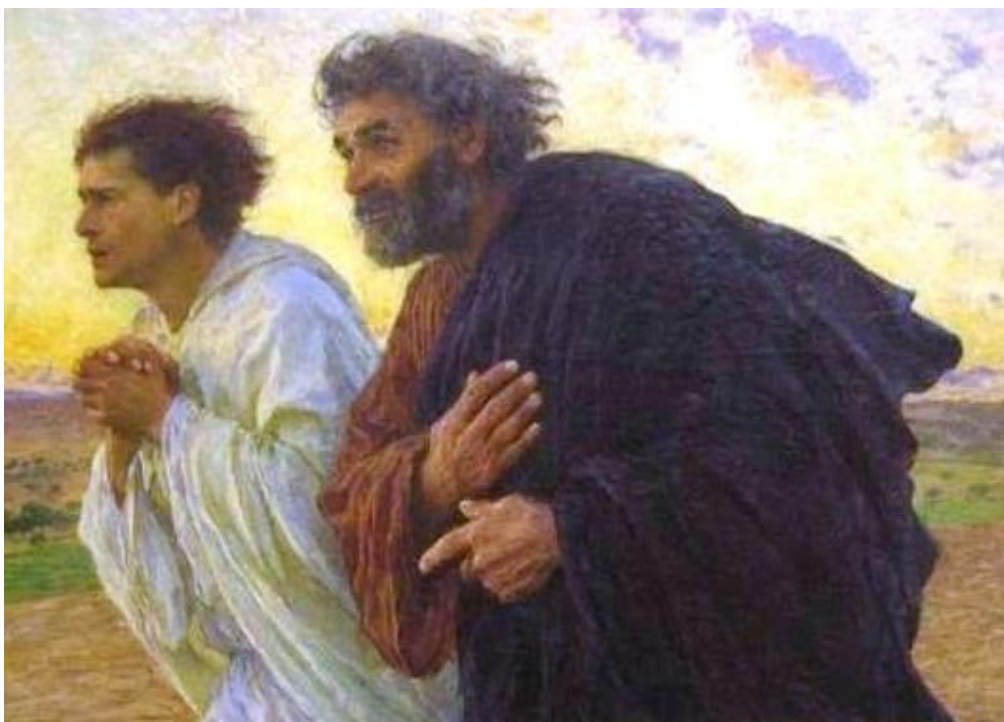
A definite change took place after the imprisonment of Paul. The man himself was different, for although he was unready to quit the ardent pursuit of his calling as Philippians showed (Phil. 3:12), time was against him. In Philemon he described himself as "Paul the aged" (Philem. 9), and in Philippians he indicated that death might not be far distant (Phil. 1:20-21). He was relying increasingly on the aid of his younger associates, who were still free and better able than he to carry on the work of preaching.

The Pastoral Epistles, I Timothy, Titus, and II Timothy, belong at this stage in his career. Their genuineness has been disputed because of the differences between them and the general body of Pauline literature in vocabulary, in style, and in content. They still bear Paul's name, and their connection with his known biography is sufficiently strong to warrant their acceptance, since his vocabulary and style may vary with age and circumstances. There is a marked difference in both between the Prison Epistles and the Travel Epistles, so that a further difference between the others and the Pastoral Epistles is not surprising.

The biographical data that they supply seemingly indicate that Paul must have been acquitted on his first hearing before the emperor and that he enjoyed thereafter a short period of free ministry. His original plan had been to deposit the offering of the Gentile churches at Jerusalem, and then to hasten westward in order to strengthen the church in Rome, from which he would proceed to Spain. Four years at least had elapsed since he had been the master of his own plans, but finally he was released. The allusions to his movements in the Pastorals bear no relation to the account given in Acts, and in many particulars do not correspond with it at all. The inevitable deduction is that the three epistles must have been written later, when Paul was travelling again.

The chronological relations of the Pastorals to the Prison Epistles seem clear from their reference to Paul's companions. Many of these are identical with those of the Prison Epistles, but are located in places that show that they had left Paul's immediate vicinity. Timothy had been left at Ephesus while Paul was en route to Macedonia (I Tim. 1:3), whereas on the last trip that Timothy took with Paul the order of procedure was from Macedonia to Asia (Acts 20:4-6), and Timothy did not remain in Ephesus. Demas had deserted Paul (II Tim. 4:10), whereas the Prison Epistles included him among the group at Rome (Philem. 24). Titus was left in Crete (Titus 1:5), and then went to Dalmatia (II Tim. 4:10), but on none of the journeys in Acts did Paul go to Crete, nor did he have Titus with him when he finally did go there during the voyage to Rome. Mark was in Asia (4:11) where Paul had recommended him according to one of the Asian letters (Col. 4:10). Luke was still with him (II Tim. 4:11). Tychicus had gone on his errand to Ephesus (4:12). Paul himself had visited Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3), Crete (Titus 1:5), Nicopolis (3:12), Corinth (II Tim. 4:20), Miletus (4:20), and Troas (4:13), and was presently located in Rome (1:17). He was in prison (1:16) and was quite sure that the end of his life was not far away (4:6-7). Altogether the situation was very different from that described by the Prison Epistles.

Within the range of the Pastoral Epistles there was probably some lapse of time. I Timothy pictures Paul as travelling and active, counselling his young lieutenant concerning his pastoral duties. Titus is quite similar in its outlook. II Timothy, however, is definitely a terminus, for Paul evidently was confident that he would not survive the winter (II Tim. 4:21). His first hearing, at which nobody defended him, had ended favourably (4:17), but his accusers had become more vicious (4:14), and his condemnation and execution would be only a matter of time. The temper of Nero was very uncertain, and the chances of further clemency from him would be small. The Pastorals belong together. If vocabulary and style can be used as a criterion for determining their relationship to each other, they certainly must have been written by the same man and under the same general circumstances. They are, therefore, a fair basis for judging the state of the church in the seventh decade of the Christian era.



Early Men of the Christian Faith

One of the great lessons we learn from Timothy is to practice genuine faith.

Timothy was quite young when he first met the apostle Paul. His father was Greek, a gentile. His mother was Jewish, an Israelite. Some think, based on comments in Paul's letters to him, that Timothy was timid. Yet a closer look tells a different story. He encountered persecution, faced it and weathered it well.

Timothy kept company behind bars with Paul. More than once he nearly died. He was a faithful courier for Paul. He served the church at Ephesus, in Asia Minor, where members were predominantly gentile. We can learn much from the young evangelist Timothy, a Greek to gentiles, a Jew to Jews.

Timothy's early years

It is encouraging to read about the faithful parents or grandparents of a saint. Such is the case with Timothy. Scripture contains little direct information about him, but we can catch glimpses through the thoughts and writings of others who knew and worked with him.

Timothy's grandmother was named Lois, his mother Eunice. God doesn't shirk from mentioning the names of people who set themselves against Him (as in Hymenaeus and Philetus, named in 2 Timothy 2:17), so it is encouraging to see

how often God mentions the names of some who honoured Him, especially when He gives honour to a disciple's parents.

Paul speaks highly of both Lois and Eunice. He wrote to Timothy: "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Timothy 1:3-5)

3: I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

4: Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5: When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Let's explore Paul's commendation of Timothy's grandmother and mother. Doing so can help us better understand Paul's high regard for Timothy.

Faithful grandmother

Grandmother Lois was a Jewess, married to a Jew. Lois's husband-Timothy's grandfather-is not mentioned, which suggests, according to several commentaries, that he was deceased. God does things with purpose, so there must be some good reason why Lois's husband wasn't named.

God sometimes works in a physical family, as He did here, establishing Jesus' faith in one family member so it can be passed along to others. Sometimes God uses the child in a more obvious way than He uses the parents or grandparents, as happened with Timothy. The faith of God can be nurtured, seasoned and matured as it passes through grandparents and parents to a child. It's not only an honor for a parent to serve in this way but a high calling.

In modern times, awash as they are in the technology of instantaneous communication, nearly everyone strives for his 15 minutes of fame. We know God doesn't look at a saint's worth in this way. He uses people in different settings in different ways.

“Every person is important to God.”

In Timothy's case perhaps God used his grandmother and mother to prepare him for His service. This should be highly encouraging to all of us. God's perspective extends beyond the horizon while we often limit ourselves through tunnel vision.

Faithful examples for Timothy

The crowning characteristic of Timothy was his unfeigned faith, which he shared with Lois and Eunice.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God-"because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him".

Abraham and Daniel prospered under circumstances that would have defeated lesser men because they had this kind of faith. King Saul's son Jonathan exhibited genuine faith in God, though his father failed in this regard. Faith and love for God go hand in hand. True followers of God can do no better than to love and have faith.

Faithful mother

When Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, introduces Timothy, we read about Paul journeying to Derbe and Lystra.

"And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

"Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" Acts 16:1-5:

1: Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

2: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3: Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

4: And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5: And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Consider what these verses tell about the character of Eunice and Timothy. Luke describes Timothy's mother as "a certain Jewish woman who believed" (verse 1). She believed God's Word and obeyed it. She accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah.

Consider Luke's and Paul's opinion of Timothy. First, the members of God's Church at Lystra and Iconium, two cities in Asia Minor, spoke highly of Timothy's faith as evidenced by his conduct. They commended Timothy to those who passed their way, including Paul, Luke and his companions. When Paul heard the good words these members said about the young man, he determined to take Timothy with him on his missionary journeys. Since Timothy's father was a gentile and his mother Jewish, and since Paul was aware that many Jews lived in the areas Paul and Timothy would visit, he circumcised young Timothy (verse 3). This helped Timothy function as Paul did within the multicultural world of the day, to be all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9: 19-22)

To the gentiles Timothy could identify as a gentile because of his Greek father. To the Jews he could identify as a circumcised Jew.

Serving with Paul

Paul began to train and use Timothy to strengthen the churches in the faith; the congregations increased in number daily (Acts 16:4-5, see above)

Timothy soon began to serve not only as a companion to Paul in his travels but as a pastor. After all, he had been personally trained by one of the most zealous of the apostles, Paul himself. Timothy was to suffer along with Paul in many of the apostle's trials.

Timothy was a constant companion of Paul. In Acts 16:12 we read:

12: And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

We read that Paul and Timothy, along with Silvanus and Luke, journeyed to Philippi. Years later, when Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian Christians, he offered encouragement by informing them of his intention to send Timothy to see them.

"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me" (Philippians 2:19-23).

Was Timothy timid?

Let's pause to discuss the apparent contradiction that Timothy seemed a little timid 2 Tim. 1:6-8

6: Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

7: For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

8: Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

Yet he was one who was heralded as strong in the faith (verse 5). How can we reconcile the two views?

We can better understand Timothy when we evaluate him through the eyes of God rather than through the eyes of the world.

The world perpetuates the deceptive notion that might makes right, that only the strong should survive. For society to take note of a man he often must project an aggressively virile image, just as a woman must display a sexually appealing,

glamorous persona. With God such is not the case. God looks on the heart, not on one's attractiveness or stature (1 Samuel 16:7):

7: But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

God is not impressed by anyone's outward appearance.

Timothy fit the mould of other notable Bible personalities. Moses, for example, didn't want to be God's spokesman and even begged God to choose someone else (Exodus 4:1), (Exodus 4: 10 and 13), Jonah 1:3), (Jeremiah 1:6)

It should be no surprise that Timothy might hesitate at times. He was expected to be strong in the face of persecution and death. One could scarcely spend much time around Paul without also receiving threats of physical violence.

God tells us, again through Paul, that when He calls someone to represent Him He often passes over the apparently strong of the world for those the world might consider as weak. Notice Paul's revelation about God's methods: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:26-28)

26: For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28: And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.

What purpose could God's choice of the weak of the world accomplish? The next verse tells us why God typically uses the physically unimpressive to accomplish His purpose. It is "so that no one may boast before him" (verse 29, NIV). Don't miss this key to understanding how God works through human beings. If God used vain, egotistical people to do His work, a work of humility

and service, how far would He get? It's a contradiction of terms to utter "godly service" and "arrogance" in the same breath. They can't fit together. Reconciling them is an impossible task.

For God to really be able to use a person, that person must come to a recognition and acknowledgment of his human weakness. God can use human beings who know they are weak. When someone knows he is nothing to speak of physically, who knows he can't save himself, God can teach and lead that person to serve Him and mankind. Such a person knows the credit belongs to God, not to himself.

Such was the case of young Timothy. Ultimately he proved to be stronger than any robust, masculine character, for he would rely on God for his strength. Timothy's faith in God made him strong. This is why God could use a young man who, to others, might have seemed timid.

Paul and Timothy in Ephesus

Paul speaks of Timothy's service with him in Ephesus. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith" (1 Timothy 1:1-4)

1: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

2: Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

3: As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

4: Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Paul called Timothy his true son in the faith. When Paul said these words, he was offering a compliment. He urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to oversee the congregation there. That duty included insisting that others not deviate from God's truth in any way.

Paul also charged Timothy with instructing others not to listen to lies or myths about God and His truth, not to waste time in unproductive, distracting issues. Paul wanted Timothy to teach others the matters of faith that would build the congregations of God and encourage them to avoid endless debates that would detract from their spiritual growth.

Paul moved on to Macedonia, leaving Timothy to care for the church in Ephesus (verse 3). He instructed his protégé on how to care for the congregation and proper worship (chapters 1 and 2), qualifications of elders and deacons (chapter 3), teaching sound doctrine (chapter 4) and dealing with people (chapters 5 and 6). Paul urged Timothy: "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed ... Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity ... Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:6-16)

6: If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

7: But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

8: For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

9: This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

10: For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

11: These things command and teach.

12: Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13: Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14: Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15: Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16: Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

These are but vignettes from the remarkable life of a young evangelist. Space doesn't allow for more in this article about Timothy's early years. Finally, let's turn our attention to his later years.

Timothy late in life

Timothy apparently visited Paul in Rome when Paul was incarcerated. In two of Paul's epistles from prison, to the Philippians and Colossians, he sent greetings from himself and Timothy. (Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1)

It appears that Timothy was also imprisoned at one point, since Hebrews 13:23.

23: Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

The verse refers to his being released. As He led Paul, God was seasoning Timothy in the ways of a persecuted saint and minister of Christ. We see no suggestion that he deviated from what Paul had taught him. The Bible's silence speaks eloquently. Legend has it that Timothy continued to minister to the congregation in Ephesus and was martyred under the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96) or Nerva (96-98) (Unger's Bible Dictionary, 1964, p. 1100). If this is true it would not be out of character for Timothy to continue to work with the church in Ephesus as a servant for another 20 or 30 years. Perhaps he also served as an overseer for other congregations in Asia Minor and Greece.

A positive conclusion

Paul chose young Timothy to serve with him based on the recommendations of members of several congregations. Timothy travelled with Paul, along with Luke, Silvanus and others. As an evangelist, Timothy helped bring God's truth to gentiles and Jews in a galvanizing way.

Let's end where we started, in the book of 2 Timothy. Paul wrote this second letter from prison in Rome shortly before he died. As he drew his letter to a close, Paul wrote: "... The time has come for my departure.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

These words make Paul's opening comments that much more poignant. He had begun by writing to his "beloved son": "I thank God ... as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Timothy 1:3-5)

Paul encouraged Timothy to hold fast, to remain faithful, to keep his calling in sight and to inspire others to do the same. Paul "greatly desired" to see his beloved friend and long-time companion one last time. (2 Timothy 4:9).

9: Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

Time was running out for Paul and he knew it.

We don't know whether Paul and Timothy saw each other again, but we do know that Paul and his son in the faith will be reunited under the most positive circumstances. "I can tell you this directly from the Lord: that we who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves," wrote Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:15):

15: For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

When Christ returns He will set up the Kingdom of God at Jerusalem. "And in that day His [the Messiah's] feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east" (Zechariah 14:4):

4: And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

Timothy, along with Paul, will be with the returning Christ, as will all God's faithful servants through the ages. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven ... And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

One of the great lessons we learn from Timothy is to practice genuine faith. In this he followed the example of our Saviour. You can find Jesus' faith in His example and apply it by following His advice: "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-40):

37: Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38: This is the first and great commandment.

39: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40: On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The young evangelist Timothy will always be remembered for his genuine faith. May you be remembered likewise.

On I Timothy

Assuming that Paul was acquitted in A.D. 60 or 61 after his appeal to the emperor, he resumed his missionary activities. Contrary to his original expectations (Acts 20:38), the way was open for him to revisit the Asian churches. There had been some defection among them, for Paul counseled Timothy to "charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies . . ." (I Tim. 1:3-4). They had desired to be teachers of the law, though they were inexperienced and untaught in its mysteries (1:7). In addition to those who were intellectually confused stood those who were morally abandoned, such as Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20), who had been put under stringent discipline. Profitless argument (1:6) and spiritual shipwreck had followed these trends.

The organization of the church had increased in complexity. Offices had become fixed and were sought by some as affording desirable eminence, so

that the prestige of the office rather than its usefulness became the chief objective. Bishops, deacons, and elders are all mentioned, though probably the first and third of these classes are identical.¹ Widows who were supported by the church were "enrolled," and they assumed some responsibility for the social service of the church (5:9). The services had certain regular features: prayer with uplifted hands (2:8), modesty and unobtrusiveness on the part of the women (2:11), reading, preaching, and teaching (4:13), the laying on of hands to confer a spiritual gift (4:14). As the second and third generations of believers arose, the theology of the church was increasingly taken for granted and became decreasingly vital. Wrangling and argument developed over points of difference; heresy became a growingly imminent danger.

Timothy' s Biography

Timothy himself is an interesting study. Born in Lystra of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, he was brought up in the Jewish faith and was taught the Scriptures from childhood. Paul made him an understudy in his second journey (Acts 16:1-3), and Timothy remained with him ever after. He shared in the evangelization of Macedonia and Achaia and aided Paul during the three years of preaching at Ephesus, where he became thoroughly acquainted with the city and with the needs of the local church. He was one of the delegates appointed to Jerusalem (20:4) and probably went with Paul all the way back to that city. He was with Paul in Rome during the first imprisonment, for his name appears in the headings of Colossians (1:1) and Philemon (1). After the release he travelled with Paul and evidently was left at Ephesus to straighten out the tangle that had developed there, while Paul went on to visit the churches in Macedonia. At the end of Paul's life he joined him at Rome (II Tim. 4:11, 21), and he himself suffered imprisonment (Heb. 13:23), from which he was later released.

Timothy was a trustworthy but not a forceful character. He gave the impression of immaturity, although he must have been at least thirty years of age when Paul assigned him to the pastorate at Ephesus (I Tim. 4:12). He was timid (II Tim. 1:6-7) and was subject to stomach trouble (I Tim. 5:23). The epistles that bear his name were intended to encourage and strengthen him for the tremendous task that Paul had bequeathed to him.

Outline

TIMOTHY'S ADVICE TO A YOUNG PREACHER

1. Salutation	1:1-2
2. Preamble	1:3-17
The Emergency at Ephesus	1:3-11
The Experience of Paul	1:12-17
3. The Official Commission	1:18-4:5
Its Purpose	1:18-20
Concerning Prayer	2:1-8
Concerning Worship by Women	2:9-15
Concerning the Office of Bishop	3:1-7
Concerning the Office of Deacon	3:8-13
Parenthesis	3:14-16
Concerning Apostasy	4:1-5
4. The Personal Admonitions	4:6-6:19
Concerning Personal Conduct	4:6-16
Concerning relations with Groups	5:1-6:2
Widows	5:1-16
Elders	5:17-19
Backsliders	5:20-25
Bondslaves	6:1-2
False teachers	6:3-8
Avaricious persons	6:9-10
Concerning Personal Confession	6:11-16
Concerning use of Wealth	6:17-19
5. Concluding Salutation	6:20-21

Content

An integrated outline of this epistle is difficult to achieve because of its conversational style and intensely personal tone. Some sentences seem irrelevant to their context, such as the injunction to "be no longer a drinker of water" in 5:23. These are just the sort of sayings that one might expect in casual

conversation where the speaker interjects them as he thinks of them without planning a formal essay. The preamble (1:3-17) sketches the emergency for which Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus. He recalls for Timothy his own experience, which serves as a pattern of the call to the ministry. He reminds Timothy frequently of the responsibility of this calling (1:18; 4:6, 12, 16; 5:21; 6:11, 20), as if to keep him from quitting a difficult task. The official commission, introduced by the phrase "This charge I commit unto thee . . ." (1:18), deals with matters of organizational importance in the church. The corporate devotional, official, and doctrinal problems are aired, and pastoral administrative policies are outlined. Under the section on personal admonitions (4:6-6:19) Paul outlines the relation of the preacher to his own ministry and to the groups in the congregation, showing how to deal with each of them. The final appeal to Timothy as a man of God is a classic, and in the four imperatives, *flee, follow, fight, keep* (6:11-12, 14), Paul sketched the elements of personal ministerial life.

On 2 Timothy

Background

Whether Paul ever fulfilled his desire to visit Spain is not known. Clement of Rome (A. D. 95) said in his letter that Paul ". . . taught righteousness to all the world, and when he had reached the limits of the West he gave his testimony before the rulers. . . ." ⁴² If Clement was writing from Rome, it would be as strange for him to refer to Rome as "the bound of the west" as for a man living in Chicago to call that city the western boundary of the United States. Clement did not mention Spain, and it is possible that he was simply surmising what Paul had done on the assumption that he had fulfilled his avowed intention. It would be interesting to know whether Paul actually did preach there, and whether the early churches in North Africa and Britain might have been founded by his converts.

Any trip to Spain at this time, then, must be purely speculative, and its appearance on the map is at best a probability. If Paul's travels follow rigidly the Tines marked out in the Pastorals, he stopped at Corinth (4:20), where Erastus chose to remain, at Miletus, where he left Trophimus sick, and at Troas (4:13). The exact order of these steps is not prescribed by the narrative. He did not stop at Ephesus, but sent Tychicus there. He must have been arrested suddenly and taken to Rome, for he left his plans unfinished. The books that he dropped at Troas he may have intended to retrieve later, but he had no opportunity to do so. The place of his arrest is uncertain; it might have been Troas or Nicopolis.

The cause of his arrest is also uncertain. If Alexander the coppersmith mentioned in II Timothy 4:14 is identical with the Alexander of Acts 19:33, one might venture a guess that he was a Jewish metallurgist who was disgruntled with Paul on two counts: Paul's preaching of free grace for Gentiles, and the decline of the trade in shrines at Ephesus because of Paul's vigorous inroads into heathenism. The situation at Ephesus had been tense. Paul spoke in II Corinthians 1:8 of "our affliction which befell *us* in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life." In Acts 20:19 he referred to "plots of the Jews" that had been formed there. Perhaps Alexander, still rankling over Paul's escape from Ephesus and over the loss of trade that his fellow workmen had suffered, denounced him to the Roman authorities and finally brought about his condemnation. Alexander was known to Timothy also, and Paul's counsel to beware of him implies that he was operating where Timothy was, perhaps in Ephesus.

The general tone of the Pastoral Epistles reveals a church that was fighting for its life against the malicious jealousy of a frustrated Judaism and against the corrupt indifference of a decadent paganism. Paul, the representative of the passing generation of missionary pioneers, was delegating his responsibilities to younger and more vigorous assistants, some of whom, like Titus and Timothy, were worthy successors, and others of whom, like Demas, were recreant (II Tim. 4:10). II Timothy was his last message to his helpers and friends before he passed from the scene.

Outline

2 Timothy: The Farewell Message

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Temple of Apollo in what once was a large settlement known as Bassae near Phigalia

Content

The content of this last epistle is an intermingling of personal sentiment and administrative policy, of reminiscence and instruction, of sadness and confidence. Its main purpose was to strengthen Timothy for the arduous task that Paul himself was about to relinquish. He laid down the pastoral pattern by first reminding Timothy of his own personal experience, and by including him in it: "who saved us, and called us with a holy calling . . . according to his own purpose and grace" (II Tim. 1:9, italics ours). With this calling in mind, he urged Timothy to undertake his problems as a soldier goes to war (2:3), trusting his general to plan the campaign, and serving wholeheartedly and uncomplainingly in the ranks wherever he is needed. In personal life and in public relations with the church he should always be the Lord's servant, not contentious, but ready to help all people to understand the truth of God.

The picture of the last days, like the similar passage in I Timothy 4:13, was a piece of prophecy characterizing the conditions to which the church might look forward. The antidote that Paul prescribed for the influx of evil was the knowledge of the Scriptures, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

The final charge (4:1-6) is a classic, and should be studied carefully by every candidate for the ministry.

Estimation

The Pastoral Epistles as a group are the most valuable source extant for understanding the life of the church in the transition period between the close of the pioneer days and the emergence of the institutional organization that is portrayed in the Epistles of Ignatius. Two or three tendencies are worthy of notice.

For one, the growth of heresy is more apparent. Opposition to truth and doctrinal divergences appear in all the Pauline Epistles. Galatians attacks legalism, I Corinthians states that some did not believe in the resurrection of the body, Colossians reflects the inroads of some philosophic cult. These, however, were sporadic and local, with the possible exception of the Judaizing tendency, but even that varied in its character and intensity in different places. In the Pastorals these same errors appear, but they are intensified and constitute a future menace that the younger preachers must meet.

Because of this menace, there is a greater stress on formulated creed in the Pastorals than in the earlier writings. The specific doctrinal formulas in Titus, the injunction to "hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me" (II Tim. 1:13), and the frequent sentences in creedal form (I Tim. 1:15; 2:3-5; 3:16; 4:10; II Tim. 1:10; 2:8; 3:16) impress the reader that the Pastorals were written to a church that was beginning to put its faith into articulate terms. Such creedal expressions were current, for the formula "Faithful is the saying" is used to introduce a number of them as if they were commonly employed in the oral teaching of the church (I Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; II Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). The phrase "sound doctrine" also occurs frequently (I Tim. 1:10; 6:3; II Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 8).

The word "sound" means literally "healthful" and is usually connected with good works as well as with correct principles. Creed and life are never divorced in the Bible.

Although the self-consciousness of the church as an institution had begun to emerge (I Tim. 3:15), it had not become a fixed hierarchy or a machine organization. Spiritual vitality and conduct were more important than ritual and politics, and the missionary motive was still keen. In spite of incipient persecution and heresies, the church was still growing apace.



Before the starting of the restorations, the Temple of Apollo in what once was a large settlement known as Bassae near Phigalia

Commentaries 1 and 2 Timothy

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 1: 1-20

1:1-7 The pastor and sound doctrine

Verses 1-4. The pastor and unsound teachers

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul had been commissioned to make known the message about him. Paul's coming to be an apostle, or one who had been sent forth as a messenger, proved to be "according to the command [promise (fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus)] of God" and "of Jesus Christ," indicating that both God and Christ had decreed that he would serve in this capacity and under their direction. (1:1)

God is called the "Saviour," for he sent his Son to the earth to surrender his life for sinful humans, making it possible for all who responded in faith to be saved or liberated from sin and condemnation. Jesus Christ is the "hope" of believers, for through him all the promises of his Father will be fulfilled. Apart from Jesus, believers would have no hope of coming to be sinless children of God and enjoying all the blessings associated therewith. (1:1)

The apostle addressed Timothy as a “genuine” or “true child in the faith.” A number of translations represent this to mean that Timothy was a true child to the apostle (“a true child to me because you believe” [NCV]; “his [Paul’s] true-born son in the faith” [REB]; “because of our faith, you are like a son to me” [CEV]; “my true child in faith” [NAB]). In 2 Timothy 2:1, the apostle specifically referred to Timothy as “my child,” for he was like a father to the young man and had taught him by word and example. The absence of the personal pronoun “my” in the Greek text, however, could indicate that Paul affectionately spoke of his younger fellow worker as a “true child in the faith,” that is, a genuine and dearly beloved fellow believer. (1:2)

The apostle’s prayerful desire for Timothy was that he might have “favour, mercy [and] peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” The gracious “favour” or unmerited kindness would include the aid and guidance God and the Lord Jesus Christ would provide. “Mercy” would involve continuing to be a recipient of their compassionate care, Christ’s intercession, and his Father’s forgiveness. “Peace” would be the sense of well-being and security arising from being fully aware of the love of God and Christ. (1:2)

On an earlier occasion, Paul had appealed to Timothy to remain in Ephesus while he was on his way to Macedonia. No mention is made of this in the book of Acts. This may be an indication that the reference is to an incident after Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome ended, as the Acts account closes with the apostle’s still being in confinement. At the time the apostle wrote the letter, he again requested that Timothy stay in Ephesus. Problems had arisen in the community of believers there, and Paul wanted him to assist the congregation to take corrective action. Certain ones in Ephesus taught things that did not accord with the truth Christ had revealed. Therefore, Paul instructed Timothy that he should command them not to teach other doctrines and not to focus on myths and endless genealogies. The context does not provide any indication about these myths or the lengthy genealogies. In view of the later mention of the law, the reference is likely to Jewish fables and genealogies. (1:3, 4)

Verses 5-7. The pastor and legalists

While myths and genealogies gave rise to “searching,” debating, or controversy, they were no part of the “stewardship of God [pertaining to] faith.” Nothing associated with myths and genealogies promoted faith in God and Christ. They were distracting elements, dispensing nothing beneficial as does the sound teaching that had been divinely entrusted to Paul as a stewardship. (1:4)

The apostle’s command to stop wrong teaching and preoccupation with myths and genealogies served to promote “love out of a clean heart,” “a good conscience, and unhypocritical faith.” This would be a genuine love for God and

fellow humans that had its source in a pure or undefiled “heart” or inner self. Such love would include a willingness to forego personal rights out of regard for the interests of others. The individual would be living uprightly and thus preserve a good conscience. An unhypocritical faith would be a trust in God and Christ that prompted a caring response to the needs of others. This faith would not be a mere expression of belief. (1:5)

Certain ones in the community of believers had not pursued the right course, having deviated from showing genuine love and failed to maintain a good conscience and a living faith productive of praiseworthy deeds. As a consequence, they had turned aside from wholesome teaching and engaged in empty, valueless, idle, or speculative talk. (1:6)

They wanted to be teachers of the law that God had given to the Israelites but misunderstood its purpose. Lacking a proper view of the law, they had no understanding of the subject matter and so did not know what they were talking about. Yet they made dogmatic assertions about things they did not rightly comprehend. (1:7)

1:8-11 The law and the gospel of Christ

Verses 8-10. The purpose of the law

Referring to himself and Timothy (if not using the first person editorial plural), Paul continued, “But we know that the law [is] good, if one uses it lawfully.” The provisions contained in the law were good and served to protect obedient ones from harm and promoted their well-being. Those who understood the purpose of the law could use it lawfully or legitimately. (1:8)

God did not give the law to the Israelites because they were righteous. Laws are not formulated for upright persons but for those who violate standards of propriety. Intended to restrain wayward conduct, law is for the lawless ones— unruly or defiant persons, the godless and sinners, the unholy and profane or the morally corrupt, persons who would murder a father or a mother, manslayers, practitioners of sexual immorality, men who have sexual relations with other men, kidnappers or those who seize others to sell them as slaves, liars, perjurers, and persons who act contrary to the “healthy” or sound teaching that is in harmony with “the evangel of the glory of the happy [*makários*] God.” (1:9-11)

Verse 11. The purpose of the gospel

In being linked to the words “of the glory,” the “evangel” (or the good news about Jesus Christ) may be designated as glorious or magnificent because of its incomparably great value. The Greek word *makários* can be rendered “happy,” “fortunate,” or “blessed.” With reference to God, the term may be understood to

denote a state of matchless well-being, contentment, and satisfaction. Paul had been entrusted with this good news, which called for him to proclaim the message that had God as the ultimate source. (1:11)

1:12-17. The gospel of Christ and the sinner

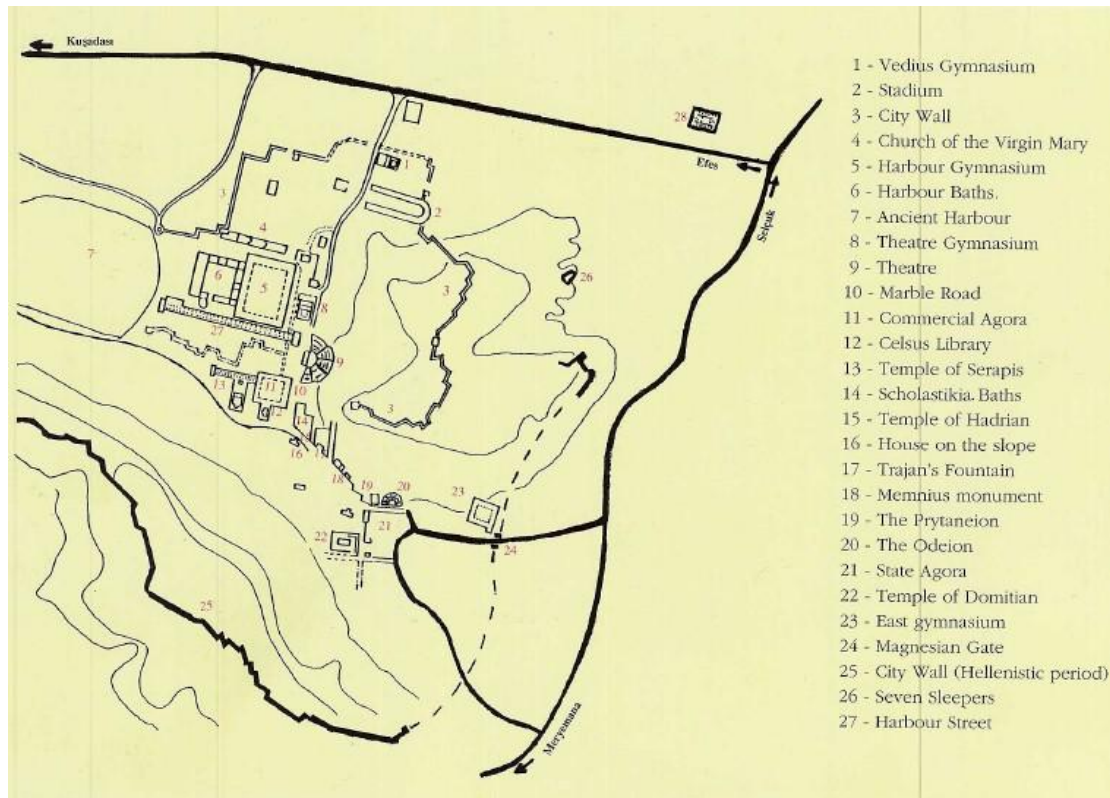
Verses 12-15. Salvation and commission of Paul the sinner

The apostle was grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ for having empowered him to carry out his commission, having considered him faithful or trustworthy to be granted a service or ministry. Paul deeply appreciated that Jesus Christ had the confidence in him that he would faithfully discharge the commission that had been given to him. (1:12)

This was especially the case because of his former course of life. Paul had been a “blasphemer,” for he had looked upon Jesus as an impostor or a false Messiah. His failure to honour Jesus as the Son of God meant that he had dishonoured the Father who had sent him. In attitude and action, Paul had reproached Christ and so was guilty of blaspheming him and his Father. He had persecuted Jesus Christ’s disciples and sided with those who wanted to impose the death penalty upon them. (Acts 8:1; 9:1, 2; 22:19, 20; 26:9-11) In his vicious campaign of persecution, Paul had acted in an insolent or haughty manner. But he was shown mercy or granted forgiveness upon repenting. He had not defiantly set himself in opposition to what he knew to be true but had been in a state of ignorance or blindness when conducting himself like a person without faith in God and Christ. (1:13)

To Paul, Christ’s gracious favor or unmerited kindness had overflowed or been superabundantly bestowed, for he had been forgiven for his wrong course and commissioned as an apostle. He had come to have faith and love. Formerly, as a persecutor, he did not have the faith that centered in Christ and had shown hatred, not love, for Christ’s followers. “Faith and love in Christ Jesus” may mean the faith and love of which Christ is the source or the faith and love that Paul came to have by coming to be at one with Christ. (1:14)

The apostle identified the “word” or statement he next made as being trustworthy or reliable and deserving of “all” or full acceptance. This “word” is, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” providing the basis through his sacrificial death for deliverance from sin and condemnation. Because of his past as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a haughty man, Paul spoke of himself as “first” or foremost among sinners. (1:15)



Verses 16-17. Paul's salvation an example for all believing sinners

The reason he was shown mercy, however, was that in him “first,” or foremost in his case, Christ Jesus might show “all,” or the superlative extent, of his patience or forbearance as an example to those believing on him for eternal life. Christ’s forbearance in Paul’s case would assure all other believers that they, too, would be forgiven upon putting faith in the Son of God and would come to have eternal life, the real life of an enduring approved relationship with the Son and his Father. (1:16)

The Father is the source of the gracious favour or incomprehensibly great kindness Paul had been shown. This is the apparent reason for the prayerful words, “But to the King of ages, incorruptible [and] invisible, the only God, [be] honour and glory for the ages of the ages. Amen.” For the “ages” or for all eternity, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the King or Sovereign, with everyone being subject to him. He is the living God, incorruptible or deathless and invisible to human eyes. While there are those whom humans may call “god,” he alone is such in the ultimate sense, for only he is the Most High. Honour or dignity and glory, splendour, or magnificence belong to him and are rightly ascribed to him and that for all the ages to come or for eternity. Appropriately, the apostle ended with “Amen” (so be it; truly; surely). (1:17)

1:18-20. The charge to Timothy the pastor

Verses 18-19a. The charge

Verses 19b-20. The warning

Based on the context, Paul's charge to Timothy (whom he affectionately called "child") related to his correcting the situation that had developed on account of those who taught falsehoods in Ephesus. When discharging the directive the apostle had given him, he was to do so according to earlier prophecies about him, so that he might, on the basis of these prophecies, "fight the good fight." Seemingly, at the time Paul chose him to be his travel companion and, with elders from the community of believers, laid hands upon him, either he or one or more of the elders then present spoke prophetically about the service Timothy would render. (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; compare Acts 13:1-3.) The "good fight" would be the firm stand he was to take against error, remembering that, as the previous prophetic words about him revealed, he had divine backing when discharging his responsibilities. (1:18)

In carrying out his assignment, Timothy needed to maintain "faith," an unbreakable trust in God and Christ, and a "good conscience" by upholding and defending what was right and fair. Certain ones had shoved a good conscience aside, refusing to be guided by it. This resulted in their experiencing shipwreck respecting their faith. They deviated from living the kind of exemplary life that an active faith prompts, thus revealing that their faith or trust in God and Christ had been wrecked. (1:19)

Among those with a ruined faith were Hymenaeus and Alexander. According to 2 Timothy 2:17, Hymenaeus maintained that the resurrection had already occurred. This may have been a denial about a future resurrection and judgment, which might then have been presented as a basis for the claim that the manner in which one lived really did not matter.

Paul handed Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan, expelling them from the community of believers and exposing them to the world where the adversary exercises authority. This placed them outside the realm where God's spirit is at work. Finding themselves in the realm where people lived without any knowledge of God and were primarily guided by their sensual desires, they would learn from the severe discipline not to blaspheme if they wanted to be part of the congregation again. (1:20)

Notes:

In verse 2, numerous manuscripts read "our Father.

Verse 4 mentions “myths and genealogies.” The Babylonian Talmud contains numerous rabbinic fables or myths. One of these involves Rabbah bar Bar Hannah. He said that on one occasion an Arab told him, “Come, I will show you those swallowed up with Korah.” Then, at a place where there were two cracks in the ground and from which steam ascended, the Arab soaked a ball of wool in water and “placed it on the point of a spear,” singeing the wool when he passed it there. “He said to me: ‘Listen to what you hear.’ And I heard them saying thus: ‘Moses and his Torah are true, and [we] are liars.’” The Arab said to Rabbah bar Bar Hannah, “Every thirty days Gehinom returns them like meat in a pot, and they say thus: ‘Moses and his Torah are true, and [we] are liars.’” (Babylonian Talmud, Steinsaltz Edition, *Sanhedrin* 110a, b)

According to the Babylonian Talmud (*Pesahim*, 62b), the daughter of Hanina ben Teradion studied 300 laws from 300 teachers in one day (which is probably an exaggeration) but could not complete the “Book of Genealogies” (likely designating a commentary on Chronicles, specifically its many genealogical lists) in three years. Regarding the passage beginning with the words “And Azel had six sons” (1 Chronicles 8:38) and ending with “these were the sons of Azel” (1 Chronicles 9:44), the many different interpretations are referred to as being the loads of “four hundred camels.” Although doubtless to be regarded as hyperbole, the comments illustrate that preoccupation with genealogies would have been a time-consuming effort that gave rise to questions and debates.

Many manuscripts (in verse 17) read, “only wise God,” and a number of manuscripts either include the word “deathless” (“incorruptible, invisible, deathless”) or say “deathless” instead of “incorruptible.”

1 Timothy 2:1-15

2:1-8. The church and public prayer

Verses 1-2a. The general injunction.

Verses 2b-8. Reasons for prayer

The conjunction “therefore” (*oun*) concerns matters to which Timothy needed to give attention while in Ephesus. Paul urged that, when the community of believers assembled, “supplications [*déesis*], prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings” be made “for all men” or for all people. He introduced this appeal with the words “first of all.” This could mean that prayer for all people is of prime importance. Another possibility is that, among other matters, Paul was making the request concerning prayer first. (2:1)

The Greek term *déesis* may refer to a very intense form of prayer, with the individual approaching God as a suppliant or a beggar. Prayers are requests or

petitions directed to God, and intercessions are prayers on behalf of others. Thanksgivings are expressions of gratitude for God's gifts, blessings, guidance, and aid. (2:1)

Believers were to pray for kings and all others occupying high positions. This was most appropriate, for rulers could use their authority for the benefit or to the injury of Christ's disciples. The attitude of rulers toward them had a bearing on whether they would be able to live a peaceful and quiet life. If those in high station came to believe misrepresentations and began to view believers as a threat, this would have had serious consequences. They could have faced having their possessions plundered, being beaten, imprisoned, and even killed. If, however, rulers had the opportunity to hear the truth about Christ's disciples, they would have been in a better position to make just decisions when opposers misrepresented or falsely accused them. So the prayers for rulers had a desirable object in view. It was in the best interests of believers to be able to enjoy peace and quiet, being left undisturbed to pursue a godly life and to aid others to learn about God's means of deliverance from sin and condemnation. Without having to face governmental opposition, they would find it much easier to live in a godly manner and with seriousness or with the dignity associated with those who act responsibly. (2:2)

"This [is] good and acceptable before our Savior, God." Numerous manuscripts link this phrase to what precedes it with the conjunction "for" (*gar*). The words may be understood to mean that praying for all people is good and pleasing in God's sight or that living a peaceful and quiet life with all godliness and dignity is good and acceptable to him. As the author of the arrangement for deliverance from sin and condemnation, God is the Saviour. (2:3)

It is God's will that "all men" or all people be saved and reconciled to him and come to knowledge of the truth. This truth pertains to Christ and how through him all people can be forgiven of their sins and become God's approved children. The truth of the good news that Paul proclaimed about the Son of God stood in sharp contrast to the falsehoods that certain ones in Ephesus were promoting. (2:4)

That believers would pray for all people regardless of their station in life is only right, for there is but one God and one mediator between God and humans. The "man Christ Jesus," in his capacity as mediator, effects a reconciliation with his Father of all who put faith in him. (2:5)

The basis for his mediatory function is his sacrificial death. "He gave himself a ransom for all." Upon surrendering his life, Jesus Christ ransomed or bought the entire human race, making it possible for all who accepted this arrangement in faith to be forgiven of their sins and to be reconciled to God. The testimony

concerning this was to be made known in its “own time.” After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the time came for this witness to be given, urging people everywhere to repent of their sins and to accept the ransom price he had paid for them. (2:6; for other meanings regarding the “testimony,” see the Notes section.)

For the purpose of bearing witness, Paul was divinely appointed as a proclaimer and an apostle (one sent forth to make known the message about Christ). He solemnly affirmed his being a proclaimer and an apostle, saying, “I speak the truth, I am not lying.” Then he identified himself as a “teacher of nations in faith and truth.” Paul taught people of the nations about faith in God and Christ and made known the truth about them, conveying everything that was needed for individuals to become part of the family of God’s beloved children. (2:7)

At this point, the apostle again directed attention to matters pertaining to the community of believers. When believers assembled in various places, Paul wanted men to do the praying, “raising holy hands without wrath and disputes.” One of the attitudes assumed when praying was to raise the arms with open palms as would a suppliant. The men who prayed should be able to do so with “holy hands” or hands that did not have the stain of sin. Moreover, they should be at peace with fellow believers, not harbouring anger or being involved in controversies or debates. (2:8)

2:9-15. The order of women in Christian society

Verses 9-10. A Christian woman’s demeanour and dress

The Greek term for “woman” (*gynē*) can also mean “wife.” Therefore, Paul’s comments may either be understood as applying to women generally or more specifically to wives. When assembling with fellow believers, they were to comport themselves in keeping with what society commonly expected from exemplary women or wives when they entered the public sphere. They were not to attract undue attention to themselves by the way they clothed or adorned themselves. Instead, believing women or wives were to dress modestly and sensibly, avoiding expensive apparel, gold ornamentation or pearls, or braiding their hair to form intricate or attention-getting designs. (2:9)

Their attire should reveal to observers that it was becoming for women who, by engaging in good works, were committed to godliness. These “good works” would include extending hospitality to strangers, helping the needy, and caring well for the family. (Compare Acts 9:36, 39; 1 Timothy 5:10; Titus 2:4, 5.) Additionally, by not flaunting wealth, believing women would avoid giving the appearance of elevating themselves above the more numerous fellow believers with limited means, including slaves. All were members of just one family of God’s beloved children. (2:10)

Verses 11-15. A Christian woman's reaction to men

In the congregation, a wife or woman would not be disruptive or put herself forward, but her role would be that of a learner or quiet listener “in all submissiveness.” This would harmonize with the subordinate place of women in the family arrangement, where the husband occupied the position of household head. (2:11)

As to teaching publicly in the congregation, Paul continued, “I do not allow a woman [or wife] to teach nor to have authority over a man, but to be quiet.” It would have been contrary to the sense of modesty and propriety for a woman to step out of her role as a wife under her husband's headship and to instruct him and other husbands publicly. In the public sphere, she would be a quiet or a respectful listener. (2:12)

Whereas Paul taught that believing men and women had an equal standing before God as his beloved “sons” or children, he did not mean for the arrangement of headship in the family to cease nor did he intend for this to change the distinct cultural roles of men and women in the public sphere.

The apostle based his stand concerning the role of women on what he recognized as precedents contained in the book of Genesis. “Adam was formed first; then Eve.” By reason of his priority of existence, Adam occupied the position of a teacher, one from whom his wife learned. (2:13) Upon acting independently of her husband as head, she was deceived regarding the forbidden fruit and transgressed the divine command. Adam, on the other hand, was not deceived, but “listened” to his wife, choosing to heed her words to join her in disobeying God's command. In the Genesis account, Eve alone is represented as having been deceived, for only she is quoted as saying that the serpent had deceived her. Adam made no reference to having been deceived by Eve but is quoted as saying, “The woman whom you gave [to be] with me, she gave me [fruit] from the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12, 13, 17)

It appears that the apostle still had thoughts from the Genesis account in mind when he added, “But she will be saved through childbearing, if they remain in faith and love and holiness [along] with propriety [*sophrosyne*].” The judgment pronounced on Eve involved childbearing and the difficulties that would attend it. Seemingly, Paul saw in this aspect the role of women in the home. Being occupied with raising children and caring for household affairs, a woman would be “saved,” possibly meaning delivered or protected from taking a course that would be spiritually injurious to her. Later in this letter, Paul encouraged younger widows to marry, raise children, and manage a household. Not having family responsibilities and so being idle, certain young widows had ended up going from house to house as gossips and busybodies, talking about matters that

should have been kept private. Some even had experienced spiritual ruin. (5:11-15) “Childbearing,” including all the duties and responsibilities associated with family life, would have saved these widows (had they remarried) from pursuing a wrong course. (2:15)

Possibly the singular “she will be saved” is a collective singular, and the qualification for being saved, which is expressed as a plural verb (“if they remain”), could apply to women as individuals. Women would be saved or delivered from situations that could cause them to fall, provided they continued to maintain their faith in God and Christ, manifested love in their interactions with others, and lived holy or pure lives. The Greek term rendered “propriety” can denote “soundness of mind,” “reasonableness,” “moderation,” or “decency.” In this context, it appears to designate the kind of conduct and bearing that is associated with good judgment and moderation. (2:15)

Notes:

The concluding phrase of verse 6 is elliptical. As a result, the words have been variously understood. One interpretation is that Christ gave his life as a ransom so that he, at God’s appointed time, confirmed that God desires to save all. According to another view, Christ’s surrendering his life was confirmed to all at God’s appointed time.

Translations vary considerably in the meaning their renderings of verse 6 convey. “He [Christ Jesus] is proof that came at the right time.” (NCV) Christ Jesus “sacrificed himself to win freedom for all mankind, revealing God’s purpose at God’s good time.” (REB) “He [Christ Jesus] gave himself to rescue all of us. God showed us this at the right time.” (CEV) “He gave himself as a ransom for us all — an act of redemption which happened once, but which stands for all time as a witness to what he is.” (J. B. Phillips)

With reference to Paul’s speaking the truth (in verse 7), numerous manuscripts include “in Christ.”

In verse 8, the conjunction “therefore” (*oun*) links the expression of Paul’s desire respecting prayer with his having been appointed as a proclaimer and an apostle to people of the nations, making known God’s purpose for humans to be delivered from sin and condemnation. The connection appears to be that, in view of the apostle’s universal commission, all “men” or all people are rightly the object of prayer.

Both singular and plural forms of the Greek word for “dispute” (in verse 8) are found in extant manuscripts.

The application of Paul's admonition about attire and adornment (verse 9) also harmonized with what unbelievers would have regarded as exemplary. A work attributed to a female Pythagorean philosopher of the fourth or third century BCE states that a woman should not wear transparent, ornate or silk clothes, but should dress modestly in white. Thus she would not appear overdressed or as a woman given to luxury and would avoid making other women envious. She should not adorn herself with gold or emeralds, for these are costly and manifest arrogance toward women of limited means.

In the first century CE, the Roman statesman and philosopher Seneca, in a personal letter to his mother, praised her for not being impressed by jewels or pearls and for refusing to wear immodest clothing that would have "exposed no greater nakedness" upon being removed. He added, "Your only ornament, the kind of beauty that time does not tarnish, is the great honor of modesty."

The Jewish philosopher Philo (c. 20 BCE to c. 50 CE) drew a distinction between the public sphere of men and the private sphere of women, and then indicated that a respectable woman would not want to be seen "going about like a woman who walks the streets in the sight of other men." (Special Laws, III, 169-171)

1 Timothy 3:1-16

3:1-7. The qualifications of overseers

Verse 1. The honour of the office

The opening words ("trustworthy [is] the word") may either affirm that a woman would be "saved through childbearing" or serve to introduce the declaration that the man who "strives for overseership desires a good work." An "overseer" or "superintendent" in a congregation had the responsibility of looking after the spiritual interests of fellow believers as would a loving guardian. In times of persecution, overseers would be prime targets, often facing imprisonment, torture, and death. Possibly, because of the grave dangers they faced, Paul stressed that overseership was a good work (not a responsibility to be avoided out of fear). (3:1)

Verses 2-7. The qualifications of the office

Only men of the highest moral character could be entrusted with the assignment of looking after the spiritual well-being of fellow believers. Paul provided Timothy with guidelines about the qualifications he should look for in men who could serve in this capacity. An overseer should be "blameless" or free from reproach. His conduct and dealings with others should not give rise to questions but should reflect adherence to the loftiest moral standards. (3:2)

A man's being the "husband of one wife" could be variously understood. In the Greco-Roman world, polygamy existed and divorce could be obtained on various grounds. It was not uncommon for married men to have mistresses. So the meaning could be that a man should have only one living wife and be faithful to her. The strictest application would be to take the words to mean that a man who had married a second time should not be considered for appointment as an overseer. While various interpretations are possible, the primary thought appears to be that Timothy should not have considered as suitable any man whose married life was or had not been exemplary. (3:2)

A man who could serve as an overseer should be "sober" (*nephálios*), "sensible" (*sóphron*), "orderly" (*kósmios*), "hospitable," and able to teach. (3:2)

The Greek term *nephálios* can describe a person who is moderate, temperate, or sober. Often the expression relates to one who is moderate in the use of wine. The matter of moderation in drink is mentioned later (in verse 3), and so *nephálios* may here apply to the use of restraint, not being given to extremes or excesses of any kind. (3:2)

A person to whom the Greek word *sóphron* is applied would be sensible, thoughtful, or give evidence of possessing good judgment. One whom the Greek expression *kósmios* describes would be orderly, respectable, dignified, or proper in bearing and in handling daily affairs. (3:2)

The Greek term for "hospitable" is *philóxenos* and denotes showing love for strangers. Followers of Christ who were commended for their love of strangers opened their homes to fellow believers whom they did not know personally and treated them as welcome guests. (3:2; Philemon 7; 3 John 5-8)

Men who were qualified to teach would have understood the truth about God and Christ and would have been able to convey this to others, providing sound admonition and instruction. (3:2)

Those who would serve as overseers should not overindulge in drinking wine but should be setting an example in moderation. Heavy drinking often leads to fights and brawling, which would also disqualify a man from serving. (3:3)

Overseers should not be violent men who bully others or are quick to come to blows, but they should be gentle, forbearing, tolerant, or courteous. Instead of insisting on the letter of the law, these men would be able to look at matters humanely and understandingly. They would be peaceable, not contentious. (3:3)

Overseers must be free from the love of money (literally, “love of silver”). They would be known as honest men who conscientiously paid their debts and did not participate in questionable business practices or deals. (3:3)

A married overseer would be a man who commendably directed, managed, and cared for his own household. His children would be submissive to him, conducting themselves in a laudable manner. They would not be debauched youths. The words “with all dignity” (seriousness or respect) could either relate to the conduct of the children or to the manner in which the father managed the household. Both meanings are found in translations. (3:4) “He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way.” (NRSV) “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.” (NIV) “He must have proper authority in his own household, and be able to control and command the respect of his children.” (J. B. Phillips) “He must be one who manages his own household well and controls his children without losing his dignity.” (REB)

If a man is unable to manage or care well for his own household, he would hardly be able to look after a community of fellow believers. A father has more authority in his own family than he would among members of the household of faith. Additionally, natural affection in the family serves as an additional bond. So if a man had difficulty in caring for his own household, he would find it much harder to look after the spiritual well-being of a congregation, where his authority would not be as great and where fewer ties of natural affection existed. (3:5)

A neophyte or a recent convert would not be qualified to serve as an overseer. Such a man could begin to think more of himself than he should, becoming puffed up with conceit. His false view of his own importance could result in a ruinous fall and the condemnatory judgment passed on the devil. Another meaning (conveyed in a number of translations) is that the individual would experience the adverse judgment that the devil desired to be expressed against him. (3:6)

An overseer needed to have “good” or favourable “testimony” from persons outside the community of believers. Among persons acquainted with him, he should have a good reputation. There should not be anything in his past that would raise serious questions about his moral character. If he did not have a reputable standing in the community where he lived, the result would most likely be that he would “fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” Upon hearing that the man had weighty responsibility in the community of believers, unbelievers would begin making unfavourable and even slanderous remarks, making him an object of reproach. The “snare of the devil” could refer to the

trap into which the devil fell (“sharing Satan’s downfall” [J. B. Phillips] or the trap the devil set (“trapped and disgraced by the devil” [CEV])). The more likely meaning appears to be the trap the devil sets. The scandal would serve the interests of the adversary, with resultant disgrace to the whole congregation. (3:7)

3:8-13. The qualifications of deacons

Verses 8-12. Their qualifications

“Servants” or assistants commonly attended to matters involving the physical well-being of fellow believers. They looked after arrangements to care for widows or others needing help on account of unfavourable circumstances. (3:8; compare Acts 6:1-6; 11:28-30.)

The nature of the services they rendered did not require them to be apt in teaching, but they needed to be trustworthy men with a record of commendable conduct. It was vital for them to have the full confidence of the community of believers. Servants had close contact with fellow believers and personal knowledge about their needs. They had to be impartial when rendering essential aid, not overlooking anyone.

Just as there were qualifications for men who would be appointed to function as overseers, “likewise” those who would be designated as servants or helpers had to meet certain requirements. Servants needed to be “serious” or “dignified” in disposition and bearing, not frivolous in their deportment and not treating important matters lightly. (3:8)

In word, servants needed to be completely truthful, not “double-tongued.” They would not be saying one thing when meaning something entirely different or telling one person one thing and someone else something else. They were to be moderate in the use of wine, not being given to heavy drinking. With reference to money matters, servants were to be exemplary, not avaricious or shamelessly fond of dishonest gain. They would not consider using the service that had been committed to them to profit themselves. (3:8)

The “mystery of the faith” is the mystery that has faith in Christ as its object. God’s purpose to forgive sins and to reconcile humans to himself on the basis of his Son’s surrender of his life had long remained a mystery or had been hidden. Once Jesus came to the earth, died sacrificially, rose from the dead, and returned to his Father, the “mystery” was disclosed, being made known by those who responded in faith to Christ and his death for them. To have a “clean conscience” respecting the “mystery of the faith,” a man would need to be upright, harmonizing his life with the example and teaching of God’s Son. This

necessitated that servants be exemplary in attitude, deed, and word, maintaining a conscience that was not defiled by sinful ways. (3:9)

Before men could begin serving, they first needed to be “tested.” There should be unmistakable evidence that they had the required qualities and abilities to be able to serve fellow believers in a praiseworthy manner. Once they had proved themselves as qualified and capable, they could function as servants or assistants, provided no valid accusation could be made against them. (3:10)

The Greek word *gyné* can either denote “woman” or “wife.” So the reference could be to the wives of men who would be appointed as servants or assistants. If Paul had intended this to apply to wives, one would expect that he would have made similar expressions about the wives of those who would serve as overseers. The mention of “women” appears in a context of appointments to serve fellow believers, and this would seem to weigh against taking the reference to be to wives or women generally. (3:11)

In the letter to the Romans (16:1), Phoebe is called a “servant of the congregation in Cenchreae.” It is not likely that this meant she held the appointed office of a deaconess, but she probably ministered to others in a general sense, rendering valuable service to fellow believers. Paul probably entrusted Phoebe to deliver the letter to the Romans, and she doubtless was asked to perform other services in the community of believers. On the basis of the reference to Phoebe as a “servant,” one might reasonably conclude that, in 1 Timothy, the women would be those who were chosen or asked to perform specific services in or for the congregation. (3:11)

As in the case of men who rendered service (3:8), these women would likewise have to be “serious” or dignified in their deportment. They could not be slanderers, given to gossiping and passing on malicious rumours. As was said of those who would serve as overseers (3:2), the women should be moderate (*nephálios*), temperate, or sober. Their conduct should be free from any excesses or extremes. They should be “faithful,” trustworthy, or dependable “in everything” (literally, “all,” meaning either in all respects or in all matters). (3:11)

Resuming with the qualifications of men who would serve fellow believers, Paul said, “Servants should be husbands of one wife, managing children and their own households well.” Like overseers (3:4), married servants should be exemplary family men, caring properly for their households. Their being husbands of one wife would have the same significance as in the case of overseers. (3:2) Responsible family men would have the trust and respect of the larger family of faith. In being mentioned in addition to the children, the household would have included more than the immediate family members. This

may be an implied indication that servants or assistants had the ability to give good direction to others and were skilled in managing affairs. (3:12)

Verse 13. Their reward

The conjunction “for” (*gar*) seems to link the commendable position of servants in their own families and their entire household to a positive result in the community of believers. When serving fellow believers well as exemplary family heads, they gain a good standing for themselves and “much boldness in the faith that [is] in Christ Jesus.” Their being good family men and caring well for the needs of fellow believers in their capacity as servants would gain them the respect, trust, and appreciation of the congregation. In handling their responsibilities within the community of believers, such good servants would have “boldness,” not having their self-confidence undermined on account of failing to manage household affairs properly. “Boldness in the faith that [is] in Christ Jesus” may refer to the faith that is focused on the Son of God. Therefore, within the family of fellow believers, exemplary servants or assistants would have confidence in speaking and caring for essential matters. There is a possibility that “faith that [is] in Christ Jesus” refers to the faith in his Father that he manifested while on earth. In that case, a man’s serving well in the community of believers would be an expression of the kind of faith Jesus Christ exemplified. (3:13)

3:14-16. The church and revealed truth

Verses 14-15. The church and its relation

Paul hoped that he would shortly be able to join Timothy in Ephesus. In the event his intention did not materialize and he was delayed, he had written what he did so that Timothy would know how to conduct himself in the community of believers. The apostle referred to this community as the “congregation of the living God, a pillar and support of the truth.” It is God’s congregation, for he purchased it with the blood of his own Son. (Acts 20:28) As a pillar, the congregation upholds the truth, specifically the message concerning Christ and what his Father made possible through him. This would require that the members individually function as defenders and upholders of the truth that the community of believers shared in common. A “support” is a foundation or a firm basis. With the individual members adhering closely to it, the truth is supported as if resting on a solid foundation. (3:14, 15)

Paul continued, “And confessedly great is the mystery of godliness: [He] was manifested in flesh, justified in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” Like the “truth” and the “mystery of faith,” the “mystery of godliness” is summed up in Christ. God’s

purpose always had been to have humans be at one with him through his Son, but that purpose remained hidden or secret for generations until it was revealed in the first century CE. (3:16)

The “godliness” associated with this mystery may be the godliness that distinguishes the lives of those who put faith in Christ. He is the object of the revealed mystery, which is confessedly or undeniably “great,” giving rise to admiration and wonder. The aspects about the “mystery” are expressed poetically, suggesting that they were part of an early Christian composition. (3:16; see the Notes section.)

God’s unique Son was revealed in the flesh, living as a man on earth. His being justified or vindicated “in spirit” may refer to his having been raised from the dead through the operation of the Holy Spirit and thus vindicated as truly being God’s Son. (3:16; compare Romans 1:4; Ephesians 1:17-20.)

The Greek word *ángelos* can designate either a heavenly or a human messenger. At the time Jesus rose from the dead, angels did see him. (Matthew 28:2-6; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12) If the reference is to human messengers, these would have been all who saw the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, enabling them to be witnesses to his having been raised from the dead. (3:16)

Christ’s disciples proclaimed the message about him to the people of the nations. In the world of mankind, individuals responded, coming to believe that Jesus Christ is indeed God’s Son. At the time of his ascension to heaven, he was taken up in glory. He was then in the highly exalted state of the one to whom his Father had granted all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18) While on earth, God’s Son had been in a state of humiliation, but he returned to the heavenly realm in a state of matchless glory or magnificence as the Lord of angels and all humans, both living and dead. (3:16; Philippians 2:9-11)

Notes:

The Greek words for “overseer” and “servant” (3:1, 8) are not to be understood as designating “church offices” or “church positions” in the sense that the terms “bishop,” “deacon,” and “deaconess” are understood today. In the first-century congregations, “overseer” and “servant” were not titles designating an office but were descriptive of the work or service the individual performed.

In verse 3, certain manuscripts add “not avaricious [*me aischrokerdé*],” or shamelessly fond of dishonest gain.

The Greek word for “serious” (*semnós*) is missing in a few manuscripts, including the original text of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus.

In 3:16, the reading “confessedly great” has the best manuscript support. A few manuscripts read, “we confess as great.”

The first word following “mystery of godliness” and which has the best manuscript support is *hós*, meaning “who.” Other manuscripts read *hó* (which) or *theós* (God). Copyists may have chosen to correct *hós*, changing it to the neuter pronoun *hó* to make it agree with the neuter gender of the noun *mystérion* (mystery). In early manuscripts, *theós* was commonly abbreviated by omitting the vowels. As a result, copyists may have misread the pronoun *hós* as the abbreviated form of *theós*. Another possibility is that copyists deliberately changed *hós* to *theós*, using the noun that reflected the prevailing theological view regarding Christ.



A Hebrew scroll.

1 Timothy 4: 1-16

4:1-6. The pastor and doctrinal error

Verses 1-2. Demonism the source of doctrinal error

The “speaking” of the spirit may be understood to refer to the expressions believers with the prophetic gift made when God’s spirit operated upon them. According to the expressly spirit-revealed message, “in later times” some would desert the “faith, taking heed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.” “Later times” denote future times, with the length of the period separating the then-present time from the culminating future time not being specified. During the foretold time to come, professed believers would abandon or revolt against the solidly based faith in Christ and begin to pay attention to false and destructive teaching. “Deceitful spirits” would be messages purported to be from a spiritual source but which, though false, would be deceptively plausible or alluring. Instead of being healthful or sound, these teachings would be destructive. They would be “teachings of demons.” Originating from the powers of darkness, these teachings would be morally defiling and ruinous. (4:1)

The corrupting and destructive teaching would be conveyed through the “hypocrisy of speakers of lies.” Teachers of falsehood would appear as innocent and as promoting an elevated life, but their words would be harmful and corrupting. Being themselves defiled, they could not convey anything other than lies. Their hypocrisy included their falsely representing themselves and their teaching as good, whereas the very opposite was the case. They had an impure conscience, one that had become insensitive as if it had been seared with a branding iron. (4:2)

Verses 3-6. An illustration

With a desensitized conscience, the teachers of error would not believe that others could be motivated aright by a pure conscience and through the operation of God’s spirit. In their own internally impure state, they would seek to impose rules and regulations on others. They would forbid marriage and the eating of certain foods. (4:2, 3)

Teachers of falsehood did not recognize that God had created these foods to be partaken of with thanksgiving by those who have faith and know the “truth.” In the case of believers, their faith in God and Christ is evident from conduct that is consistent with faith. Their knowing the truth about God and Christ would

include their knowing what they approve. As persons who have faith and know the truth, believers are prompted to thank God for their sustenance. (4:3)

Thanksgiving is fitting, “because every creation of God [is] good, and nothing is to be rejected [when] received with thanksgiving.” The Genesis account (1:4-31) indicates that God acknowledged his creative works as good. Therefore, humans should not regard as bad what God considers as good. Everything that he has declared to be good is acceptable when partaken of with thanksgiving. (4:4)

God’s word, or the revealed expression of his provision for human sustenance, sanctifies food, setting it apart as acceptable. Additionally, prayer functions as part of the sanctification process. Through prayer, believers acknowledge the food as a gift from God, treating it as something set apart by him for their use. They are appreciative, not eating as do unreasoning animals that are incapable of acknowledging God as the generous provider of everything. (4:5)

By calling to the attention of the “brothers” or fellow believers in Ephesus the things Paul had mentioned, Timothy would be a “good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by words of faith and the good teaching” that he had followed. “Words of faith” would be the words contained in the then-existing “holy writings” and the message about Christ. These words promoted and strengthened faith or trust in God and his Son, providing essential nourishment for Timothy’s spiritual life. The good teaching he had followed would have included what he had learned from his godly mother and grandmother, from the community of believers where he grew up, and from Paul. (Compare Acts 16:1, 2; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:10; 14, 15.) This teaching, to which Timothy had faithfully adhered, also served as spiritual nourishment. Having been nourished on wholesome spiritual food (and not the unhealthful teachings of the promoters of error), he was properly equipped for service in Christ’s cause. (4:6)

4: 7-16. The pastor and self-discipline

Verses 7-11. Self-discipline in public ministry

As a good servant of Christ Jesus, Timothy was to avoid profane myths and the kind of myths that old women who are lacking in sound judgment are prone to relate. Timothy would have known the type of myths, legends, or speculative accounts Paul had in mind, but we today do not. At any rate, these myths would have been destructive or seriously distracting elements in relation to faith in God and Christ. They would have been completely valueless for providing fellow believers with sound teaching or for Timothy’s progress as a devoted servant of

Christ. Besides urging Timothy to shun worthless myths, Paul admonished him to train (*gymnázō*) himself in godliness. (4:7)

In the literal sense, the Greek term *gymnázō* refers to performing gymnastic exercises or athletic training in the nude. Such training required great physical effort and discipline. Accordingly, for Timothy to continue training himself in godliness, or for a life that honoured God and Christ, would have required personal exertion and self-discipline. (4:7)

Timothy's strenuous exertion would be worth the effort, "for bodily training is useful for a little, but godliness is useful for all things, holding promise for the life now and the one to come." The exertion and discipline associated with bodily training can contribute to physical well-being, but any derived benefits are limited to the present life. The benefits from a life of godliness and the efforts associated with it are far greater. Faithful adherence to the example and teaching of God's Son gives one a clean conscience and promotes inner joy, well-being, and contentment. The present life comes to be the best possible, for the godly person has the assurance of God's loving care and strengthening aid regardless of the circumstances. Even now the godly person is in possession of the eternal life or the real life distinguished by an enduring relationship with the Son of God and his Father. The life to come is the one to be enjoyed in the sinless state, which is accompanied by all the privileges and blessings that will be granted to God's beloved children. (4:8)

The "word" about the excelling value of godliness is trustworthy or dependable and deserves to be accepted fully. (4:9) On account of the superior benefits resulting from godliness, Paul (using the first person plural either as an editorial "we" or as a reference to himself and his fellow workers) added, "for this we are labouring and struggling, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of believers [persons having faith]." In living a life that reflected favourably on God and Christ and discharging his commission as an apostle, Paul worked hard and struggled, often doing so in the face of troubles, obstacles, and hardships. (4:10.)

He was able to exert himself vigorously even in unfavourable situations because he trusted the living God and knew that his hope rested on a solid foundation. Whereas the lifeless deities that were revered in the Greco-Roman world could do nothing for their worshipers, Paul knew that the hope that rested on the living God was certain of fulfilment. The hope involved the enjoyment of the fullness of salvation or deliverance, being completely liberated from the sinful state and coming to enjoy the inheritance God has in store for his approved children. (4:10)

Salvation or deliverance is a certainty, for God is the Saviour of “all men” or all humans. His arrangement for freeing humans from sin and condemnation and coming to be his reconciled children through his Son is available to everyone. The reality of his being the Saviour of all is evident in the lives of those who put faith in his Son. God is especially their Saviour, for they have accepted the arrangement that is available to all humans. (4:10)

Paul wanted Timothy to make the directives he had given him the basis for imparting commands and teaching to the community of believers in Ephesus. (4:11)

Verses 12-16. Self-discipline in private ministry

To avoid having anyone look down on him because of his youth, Timothy would have needed to conduct himself in an exemplary manner, giving no one occasion for legitimate faultfinding and attributing flaws to his being an immature young man. Therefore, Paul admonished him to be an example to believers “in word” or speech; “in conduct,” or in the way he carried out his responsibilities; “in love,” demonstrating active concern and care for others and putting their interests ahead of his own; “in faith” (not just in expressing his belief but by acting in harmony with it), and “in chastity,” maintaining moral purity or cleanness in all respects. (4:12)

Until he would be joining him, Paul desired that Timothy devote himself to reading, to giving admonition, comfort, or encouragement, and to teaching. For the most part, believers benefited from the holy writings and the letters sent to the congregation by hearing them read. This made it especially important for Timothy to be accurate in his reading and conveying the correct meaning through proper emphasis and pausing. Applying himself to admonition would have included providing an exposition based on what he would have read. The exposition would have served to encourage, to comfort, or to exhort the hearers. When teaching, Timothy would have endeavored to make proper application of the holy writings and to aid the listeners to understand what they heard. (4:13)

It appears that at the time of his being designated as Paul’s traveling companion, Timothy received a “gift.” This graciously bestowed divine gift made it possible for him to discharge his future responsibilities. One aspect of this gift could have been the ability to discern true teaching from false. Timothy’s really knowing the truth about God and Christ would have made it possible for him to protect fellow believers from error and harmful influences. (4:14)

Paul urged Timothy not to neglect the gift, which would require that he use it for the benefit of the community of believers. This gift had been given to him “through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the presbyterate” or the body of elders. Certain prophetic words must have been spoken at the time the body of elders laid their hands on Timothy. Likely the prophecy indicated the divine purpose for him and how he would serve. Through the laying on of the elders’ hands, Timothy was appointed or designated for special service. (4:14)

The things on which Paul wanted Timothy to meditate or to reflect would have been the responsibilities associated with his appointment and his personal conduct. The elliptical words (“in these [matters] be”) may serve to reemphasize that Timothy be fully taken up by what his service in Christ’s cause involved. These things should have been his whole life, or the object of his undivided attention. (4:15)

Fully devoted to carrying out his sacred trust, Timothy would have continued to make progress in his walk of faith and in caring well for his responsibilities as a servant to fellow believers. “All,” or every observer, should then have been able to recognize that he was making advancement in all aspects of his life. (4:15; see the Notes section.)

Paul exhorted Timothy to give heed to himself, or the way he conducted himself, and his teaching. This meant that he had to make sure that his conduct harmonized with his teaching. Moreover, what he taught needed to be solidly based on the truth about God and his Son. Sound teaching should have served to strengthen the faith of fellow believers and to help them grow as spiritual persons, progressively coming to be more like Jesus Christ. (4:16)

The admonition “stay in them” may relate to maintaining exemplary conduct and imparting sound teaching. By faithfully carrying out the service that had been entrusted to him, he would save himself and those who listened to him. When diligently cooperating with the guidance of God’s spirit in living an exemplary life and in conveying God’s word or message when teaching, Timothy would be “saving” himself. This is because he would be keeping himself free from attitudes, words, and deeds that would merit divine disapproval. Similarly, those who listened to him, responding to the sound teaching, would be strengthened in their faith and their determination to follow the leading of God’s spirit in all their conduct. They would avoid pursuing a course that would meet with divine disapproval. Instead, they would save themselves by living their lives as persons whom God, through his Son, had saved or delivered from sin and condemnation. (4:16)

Notes:

In verse 10, manuscripts read either *agonizómetha* (struggling) or *oneidizómetha* (are reproached).

After *agápe* (love), in 4:12, numerous manuscripts add, “in spirit.”

In verse 15, numerous manuscripts read “in all,” meaning that Timothy should be making progress “in all things.” The oldest extant manuscripts, however, do not include “in,” and thus represent the progress as being seen by “all” or everyone.

1 Timothy 5:1-25

5:1-16. The care of widows

Verses 1-2. Conduct towards various Christians

The community of believers is a spiritual family, and Paul instructed Timothy to treat the individual believers as he would beloved family members. The Greek word *presbyteros* can designate a man who functions as an elder in the congregation. In this context, however, the term apparently denotes an older man. In keeping with his age as a young man (possibly in his thirties), Timothy should appeal to older men as fathers, not denouncing them or expressing disapproval in a manner that would be disrespectful toward them as older persons. His bearing and expressions should reflect how he would speak to his own father. When exhorting younger men, Timothy was to treat them as brothers, not taking liberties with them. (5:1)

In his interactions with older women, Timothy should approach them as he would his own mother. With younger sisters, he should conduct himself chastely as he would with his own sisters. (5:2)

Verses 3-16. Treatment of Christian widows

Widows “who are widows” would be women who were totally bereft, having no children or grandchildren who could look after them in their declining years. These widows would be “honoured” by having provisions made for them to receive aid from the community of believers. (5:3)

In the case of a widow with living descendants, her children or grandchildren should “first learn godliness in their own household.” Their learning godliness would be by assuming the responsibility of caring for needy mothers or grandmothers, repaying them for having benefited from the help they received

as young children. Their doing so is acceptable to God, for it harmonizes with his command to honour parents. (5:4)

A completely destitute widow, with no children or grandchildren to help her, relied fully on God. In her needy state, she rested her hope or full trust in God as her helper and sustainer. For her daily necessities, she persisted in praying and supplicating him with the intensity comparable to that of a needy beggar. Her continuing “in supplications and prayers night and day” is indicative of her doing so at every opportunity. Her appeals would not have been limited to requests for herself but would doubtless have included prayers for the whole community of fellow believers. In recognizing her full dependence on God and the provisions he would make for her through human agencies, such a widow manifested a spiritual outlook. She committed all her cares to him. (5:5)

Unlike such a godly widow, the one who indulges *spataláo* herself is dead though she is living. The Greek term (*spataláo*) is descriptive of living luxuriously, voluptuously, or in a highly indulgent manner. A widow whose life could be so described would be one who pampered herself and was primarily focused on satisfying her personal desires. She thus missed the whole purpose of living. The real life is distinguished by an enduring relationship with God and Christ and is lived for them. It is a life that honours God and his Son. A self-indulgent widow would be devoid of such a life and so, although alive physically, would be dead. (5:6)

The apostle’s next words (“and these [things] enjoin, that they may be irreproachable”) may be variously understood. They could relate to the directive for children and grandchildren to care for widows in their families. By discharging this duty, they would keep themselves free from rightfully being censured for neglecting their own mothers and grandmothers. Another possibility is that the commands to be given are the guidelines that follow regarding widows. A number of translations contain interpretive renderings that are more explicit than the Greek text. (5:7) “Add these instructions to the rest, so that the widows may be above reproach.” (REB) “You should therefore make the following rules for the widows, to avoid abuses:” (J. B. Phillips) “Tell the believers to do these things so that no one can criticize them.” (NCV) “Tell all of this to everyone, so they will do the right thing.” (CEV)

A refusal to care for needy ones in one’s own family or household would constitute a disowning of the faith and make one worse than a person without faith or than an unbeliever. Faith in God and Christ is more than an expression of belief. It is a way of life that harmonizes with the example and teaching of God’s Son. Shortly before he died, Jesus arranged that Mary (who must have been a widow by then) be cared for. (John 19:26, 27) The compassionate

concern he exemplified during the course of his ministry on earth and the superlative expression of his love in surrendering his life revealed the kind of selfless love his disciples must have. Therefore, disregard for the needs of one's own, especially members of one's household (such as a widowed mother or grandmother), is very serious. This neglect would make professed believers worse than loveless unbelievers who have not been enlightened by the example and teaching of God's Son. (5:8)

For widows who would be receiving aid from the community of believers, Paul set forth specific requirements. They should not be under sixty years of age, and so they were to be beyond an age where remarriage would have been likely. A woman's having been the "wife of one husband" would indicate that she had been faithful to him and that his death had left her totally bereft. (5:9)

Widows who would be listed to receive aid from the congregation were to have a reputation for commendable works. This would have eliminated any doubts about the rightness of the congregation's assuming the care of an aged widow. Fellow believers would have felt good about compassionately looking after a woman who had formerly attended to the needs of others. Her praiseworthy deeds (to which others could testify) would have included caring well for children, welcoming strangers into her home, washing their feet and providing meals for them. The washing of the feet of "holy ones" (fellow believers) would have been a kind gesture of hospitality. When travelling, bare feet in sandals became dusty, and it would have been refreshing to have one's feet washed after having done extensive walking. (5:10)

Regarding a widow who would be put on the congregation's list, Paul continued with the requirements, "if she assisted the afflicted, if she devoted herself to every good work." While in a position to do so, she would have responded to the needs of others, doing what she could to relieve their distress. Every good work would have included everything associated with caring well for the family, extending hospitality, and generously giving of her time and effort in helping those in need. (5:10; compare Acts 9:36, 39.)

Exemplary older women who were on the congregation's list to receive assistance would also have been rendering service for fellow believers. Their prayers for the community of believers were valuable in the eyes of God. (Compare Luke 2:36, 37.) The service of these older widows doubtless included teaching younger women how to conduct themselves as mothers and wives in a manner that would bring praise and honour to God and Christ. (Compare Titus 2:3-5.)

That a widow's being on the list included both assistance from and service to the community of believers is evident from what Paul next said about younger

widows. The younger widows were not to be enrolled, as their strong desire for marriage and family life could seriously affect their relationship to Christ, resulting in their disregarding their “first faith.” In this context, the “first faith” appears to designate the initial promise to serve the congregation and thus to make themselves more serviceable to Christ. When failing to follow through, the young widows would come under adverse judgment (either divine disapproval or human censure). (5:11, 12)

Distracted by their personal desires and not being fully devoted to advancing Christ’s cause, younger widows became accustomed to being idle. With too much time at their disposal, they would go about from one house to another as gossipers and busybodies, talking about things that should not have been mentioned. (5:13)

In view of the problems that certain young widows had caused because of having become idle, Paul recommended that they get married, have children, and keep busy in caring for a household. As exemplary wives and mothers attending to family affairs, they would not give the “adversary” occasion for reviling them for disreputable behaviour. Likely the adversary would be anyone who opposed Christ’s disciples and resorted to any means possible to malign them. (5:14)

Paul already knew about some young widows who had turned aside from a divinely approved course “to follow Satan.” By their words and actions, they must have brought great reproach on the community of believers. In thus also dishonouring God and Christ, they would have come to be on Satan’s side. (5:15)

A believing woman might have relatives who were widows. It would be her responsibility to care for their needs. The congregation would then not be burdened with this obligation but could give full attention to assist widows who were “truly widows” (those with no relatives to assist them). (5:16)

5:17-22. Concerning elders

Verses 17-20. Honour due to them

Elders who ministered well to fellow believers deserved “double honor.” In being designated as “double,” this honour includes more than the honor or respect accorded to everyone in the community of believers. As in the case of aged widows, honour would include their receiving the congregation’s assistance in caring for their physical needs. Especially the elders who labored “in word and teaching” would have appropriately been the recipients of aid. The time and effort required to speak to and to teach fellow believers meant that

these elders had less time and energy for devoting themselves to working for life's necessities. (5:17)

With a quotation from Deuteronomy 25:4 (LXX), Paul backed up his admonition to honour elders by assisting them to meet their physical needs. "You must not muzzle a threshing bovine." When threshing, the animal would be able to benefit from its labour. It would not be tormented by being prevented from partaking of the threshed grain. Additionally, the apostle drew on Jesus' words (Luke 10:7), "The worker deserves his wages." (Compare 1 Corinthians 9:6-14.) Accordingly, when labouring for fellow believers, elders would be treated honourably by being compensated materially. (5:18)

In view of their labours in the congregation and the resultant visibility, elders came under closer scrutiny than did other believers. This also meant that a greater likelihood existed that someone would find fault with something an elder said or did. In order that elders might not be subjected to frivolous or unfounded accusations, Paul advised that Timothy only consider accusations that two or three witnesses could confirm, basing this on the words of Deuteronomy 19:15 (LXX). If an elder would then be found guilty of wrongdoing, he should be reproved before everyone present. This served to instil a wholesome fear in all who heard the reproof, causing them to reflect on their own course of life and to strive to live in a manner that honoured God and Christ. (5:19, 20; compare Paul's reproof of Peter [Galatians 2:11-14].)

Verses 21-22. Timothy's responsibility

Handling situations involving accusations would have been an especially weighty responsibility for Timothy, and Paul charged him to judge impartially, saying, "I adjure you before God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels to observe these [instructions] without prejudgment, doing nothing according to an inclination [of partiality]." In this solemn manner, Paul reminded Timothy that God, Christ, and the angels who look after the interests of the community of believers would be fully aware of how he followed through on his instructions when handling matters in the congregation. Timothy's judgments were to be impartial and unbiased, based on careful examination and evaluation of the facts. (5:21)

When appointing a man to serve fellow believers, laying his hands upon him, Timothy needed to avoid acting hastily or prematurely. An unqualified man could do great harm to the community of believers. The sins such an unfit man might commit would, in part, be attributable to Timothy's having acted hastily or without sufficient care in evaluating the individual's qualifications. He would then become a sharer in that one's sins. Only exemplary men were to serve in

the community of believers, and Timothy had to keep himself chaste or blameless in caring for this and other matters. (5:22)

5:23-25. Paul's personal advice to Timothy

Verse 23. Regarding Timothy's health

Possibly the stress from the weighty responsibilities that rested on Timothy contributed to health problems. Additionally, the water to which he had access would not always have been fit to drink. Therefore, the apostle advised him not to drink water but to drink a little wine for the sake of his stomach and his frequent bouts with sickness. (5:23)

Verses 24-25. Regarding the question of men's sins and good works

Again focusing on the matter of choosing men to serve fellow believers, Paul added a caution about the need for sufficient time for making evaluations. In the case of some men, their "sins," wrongs, or serious flaws are evident to everyone even before a judgment is rendered. Other men's sins or faults are not readily apparent but become manifest later. Likewise the good works of certain men may be evident to everyone, their exemplary life being acknowledged and undisputed. While this may not always be the case, eventually good works do come to light. They cannot be kept hidden, and so the passage of time would reveal which men would be qualified to serve. (5:24, 25)

Notes:

The Greek text of verses 11 and 12 is less specific than the renderings of modern translations. A literal translation would be, "But reject younger widows; for whenever they become sensuous of [away from] Christ, they want to marry, having a judgment because they disregarded the first faith." The Greek verb that conveys the thought of becoming sensuous is *katastreniáo*, and here appears to designate being impelled by a strong physical desire for the security of a home and family. This desire overrides devotion to Christ and leads to failure to follow through on the "first faith."

Translations vary in representing what happens to younger widows in relation to Christ and the nature of their "first faith." "But do not put younger widows on that list. After they give themselves to Christ, they are pulled away from him by their physical needs, and then they want to marry again. They will be judged for not doing what they first promised to do." (NCV) "Don't put young widows on the list. They may later have a strong desire to get married. Then they will turn away from Christ and become guilty of breaking their promise to him." (CEV) "Do not accept young widows because if their natural desires distract them from Christ, they want to marry again, and then people condemn them for being

unfaithful to their original promise.” (NJB) “Do not admit younger widows to the roll; for if they let their passions distract them from Christ’s service they will want to marry again, and so be guilty of breaking their earlier vow to him.” (REB) “Don’t put the younger widows on your list. My experience is that when their natural desires grow stronger than their spiritual devotion to Christ they want to marry again, thus proving themselves unfaithful to their first loyalty.” (J. B. Phillips) “But exclude younger widows, for when their sensuality estranges them from Christ, they want to marry and will incur condemnation for breaking their first pledge.” (NAB)

Paul’s directive regarding young widows does not mean that no help would have been given to those who were in real need. The apostle’s letter related to a specific situation. Young widows would not have been enrolled as women who would be receiving aid and serving the community of believers.

In verse 14, the adversary may be Satan. His reviling could then be understood as taking place through humans as his instruments.

According to another manuscript reading of verse 16, the reference is to a believing man or a believing woman who has widows as relatives.

1 Timothy 6: 1-21

6:1-5. Directions for servants and masters

Verses 1-2. The general directive

Slaves, believers under a “yoke of servitude,” were to accord their masters “all honour,” striving not to have “God’s name and the teaching” blasphemed. By being respectful of their owners and exemplary in discharging their duties, slaves would avoid becoming objects of legitimate complaints and displeasure. Masters would then not speak abusively of the God whom their slaves worshiped nor of the way of life that “the teaching,” with its focus on God’s Son, motivated. (6:1)

Slaves with believing owners were not to look down on them, despising them as not having any standing above them as Christ’s disciples. Instead, they should more readily serve them, recognizing that they are benefiting beloved brothers in the same family of faith. The things that Paul wanted Timothy to use as a basis for teaching and exhortation related either to what he had set forth up to this point or the matters he mentioned thereafter. (6:2)

Verses 3-5. Denunciation of false teachers

Anyone who taught things other than the “healthful words of our Lord Jesus Christ” and which were not in harmony with the teaching “according to godliness” is described as “conceited” (*typhóo*), “not understanding anything, but diseased about searchings” or controversial questioning and “fights over words.” (6:3, 4)

Jesus’ words, or the thoughts he expressed, are “healthful” or sound, promoting the well-being of believers. Nothing he said would ever lead anyone into a course of life that would be injurious. His words, when followed, result in lasting benefits. Teaching “according to godliness” designates teaching that serves to motivate those who heed it to live uprightly in harmony with Christ’s example. (6:3)

For the Greek term *typhóo*, the meaning “conceited” has the support of the Latin Vulgate and the Syriac. The Vulgate renders the word as *superbus* (conceited, arrogant, insolent, or superb). *Typhóo* can also signify to be deluded, and ancient Greek writers even used the word to denote being mentally sick. In this context, *typhóo* may describe a state of being extremely arrogant and deluded. Individuals who fit this description exalt their own ideas above the plain words of Jesus and often resort to bluster and ridicule when trying to persuade others to accept their distortions of the truth. (6:4)

Arrogant and deluded, advocates of error have no understanding of Jesus’ words but perceive them in a distorted manner. These persons are “diseased” in their thinking, raising speculative questions and delving into matters that are pointless. They debate and argue, fighting about the use and significance of words instead of focusing on the message the words as a whole convey. (6:4)

The questionings (“searchings” or “seekings”) and the fights over words breed “envy, strife, blasphemy, evil surmisings” or suspicions and “wrangling.” Often the objects of the envy or jealousy are those who may be more persuasive in their argumentation. Entrenched in their wrong views, advocates of error are given to strife or quarrelling. They resort to blasphemy, slander, or abusive words when countering those who reject their wrong opinions. Insisting on the correctness of their twisted views, they look with suspicion on persons who question their position and are quick to assail their reputation on the basis of hearsay and without any verifiable evidence. Teachers of falsehood are so self-deluded that they are willing to wrangle, repeatedly engaging in fierce arguments to defend their unfounded opinions. (6:4, 5)

6: 6-10. Warning directed to the rich

Verses 6-8. The blessing of godly contentment

Paul described the men who engaged in wrangling as “corrupt in mind and despoiled of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.” These teachers of falsehood were morally corrupt in their thinking and did not possess the truth as Jesus Christ had revealed it through his example and teaching. They were completely deprived of this truth, as if it had been snatched away from them as booty. These corrupt men imagined godliness (in their case, a mere profession of godliness) to be a way to derive gain. This suggests that they used their position as supposed teachers to profit materially or to elicit the admiration and praise of those who accepted their teaching. (6:6)

Persons who are truly reverential do not seek to exploit their godliness for any kind of profit. But, in itself, godliness does lead to “great gain” when accompanied by “contentment.” The godly person is content with the basic necessities of life, not yearning for riches or a luxurious lifestyle. Humans enter the world with nothing and, at death, cannot carry anything out with them. Realistically, then, godly persons are content with food, clothing, and adequate shelter, recognizing that all material things are temporary in nature. Their life as godly persons is one of “great gain,” for they enjoy an inner sense of well-being from knowing that God’s loving care, concern, and aid will never be lacking. Their hope of an eternal future as his beloved children is certain of fulfilment. (6:7, 8)

Verses 9-10. The curse of ungodly wealth

“But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many senseless and injurious desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the root of all evils is the love of money [literally, love of silver], by which some, [in] reaching out for [it], were led astray from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.” (6:9, 10)

Those who make it their aim in life to be rich will soon act out of harmony with a divinely approved course. When the goal to be rich begins to control the life of individuals, they will find themselves tempted to use dishonest or questionable means to accumulate wealth. The longing for riches is ensnaring, for the entire life becomes captive to acquiring money and possessions. Desires that are focused exclusively on obtaining material things are “senseless,” for nothing of a material nature has lasting value. Material things cannot be retained as permanent possessions. The determination to be rich hampers a person’s ability

to recognize what has the greatest importance in life. In value, nothing compares with having an approved relationship with God and Christ and being a part of his family of beloved children, wherein genuine friendships flourish. Those who greedily reach out for riches end up hurting themselves and others, sacrificing a good conscience and failing to respond in a compassionate and caring manner to fellow humans. The final result can be spiritual ruin and destruction because of forfeiting a good relationship with the Father and his Son. (6:9)

From the standpoint of where it can lead, “the love of money is a root of all evils.” When greediness controls them, persons are willing to do almost anything to obtain money. They may use questionable, fraudulent, or even violent means to acquire it, completely disregarding the harm they are causing to themselves and fellow humans. Paul knew of some in the community of believers who had become entangled by a love for money and, therefore, had ceased living a life of faith in God and his Son. Those who had been “led astray from the faith” experienced “many pains,” as if they had stabbed themselves all over their bodies. Hopelessly ensnared by their love for money, they may have sensed within themselves the emptiness of their lives. For transitory material possessions, they had given up a relationship with God and Christ, a clean conscience, a sense of well-being from an awareness of divine care and help, a loving family of fellow children of God, and a hope of sharing with them in a permanent inheritance. (6:10)

6:11-16. Warning directed to the man of God

Verses 11-12. His ambition

Referring to Timothy as a “man of God” (a man in God’s service who had been granted a special ministry or sacred trust), Paul urged him to “flee from these [things],” as would one in making a speedy escape from a grave danger. Based on the context, “these things” would be the desire for riches and the love of money, and all the injurious things that could result. Instead of a pursuit centred on obtaining temporary possessions, Timothy was to pursue the things that are enduring — “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.” These qualities are not the ones that distinguish the conduct of persons who greedily seek to gain riches. (6:11)

Pursuing righteousness means seeking to do what is right, just, or fair. The pursuit of wealth, if not outright dishonest, is marked by unfairness toward others. “Godliness” requires that God and Christ be the centre of one’s life and not the acquisition of material possessions. In the pursuit of “faith,” Timothy would have endeavoured to continue growing in his faith in God and his Son.

There is also a possibility that “faith” here denotes trustworthiness, which would have called for Timothy to demonstrate himself to be faithful in discharging his responsibilities. Love is a selfless concern and care for others, and includes a willingness to put the interests of fellow humans ahead of one’s own. This kind of love is woefully lacking among those who are determined to be rich, for they are often callous and even hateful toward the afflicted. To “endure” denotes to bear up patiently under difficult or distressing circumstances. The wealthy, on the other hand, tend to be impatient and demanding, being easily irritated when developments are not according to their liking. In their attitude, the rich may be harsh, overbearing, and demeaning, but Timothy was to be gentle, mild, or meek. (6:11)

Timothy’s fighting the “good fight of the faith” involved his struggling to uphold the faith in God and Christ, defending it and resisting those who would introduce false teachings. He would have needed to keep his own faith strong and pure and to assist the community of believers to do likewise. (6:12)

To take hold of the “eternal life” to which he had been called, Timothy had to maintain a firm grip on his relationship to God and Christ, never letting it slip from him. According to Jesus’ words, eternal life is knowing him and his Father, signifying an enduring relationship with them. Ultimately, believers will enjoy this relationship in the sinless state for all eternity. (John 17:3) Timothy came into possession of the real life, the eternal life, upon putting faith in Jesus Christ, accepting the forgiveness made possible through his sacrificial death, and thereby coming to be reconciled to his Father. (6:12)

Timothy also needed to take hold of the “good confession” that he confessed “before many witnesses.” The “good confession” could refer to the acknowledgment of his faith in God and Christ at the time of his baptism. This confession would have been made in the presence of many witnesses. Another possibility is that he, at the time of his being designated for special service with the apostle Paul, made the expression of faith before numerous witnesses. Timothy’s following through on Paul’s admonition required that he act in harmony with the expression of faith that he had made publicly, continuing to adhere to it without wavering. (6:12)

Verses 13-16. The apostle’s charge to him

In a solemn manner, Paul charged Timothy to carry out his commission, declaring his charge to be made “before God, who makes all alive, and Christ Jesus, who [when] testifying to Pontius Pilate, [made] the good confession.” God is the source of life, the sustainer of life, and the restorer of life. Thus

Timothy would have been reminded that he was accountable to the Father to whom he owed his life. Moreover, in faithfully carrying out his responsibilities, he would be in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and was to imitate his example. To Pontius Pilate, Jesus made the “good confession,” declaring that his kingdom was not of this world and that he had come into the world to bear witness to the truth. (6:13; John 18:36, 37)

The “commandment” Paul charged Timothy to keep “spotless” and “irreproachable until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ” appears to have related to the directive he had given to him about carrying out his commission. At the time of his return in glory, Jesus Christ would become manifest to all on the earth and his living disciples would be changed, joining him and the believers who had been resurrected immediately upon his arrival. It was Paul’s earnest desire that his beloved fellow worker be found approved at the time of Christ’s manifestation, having fulfilled the command respecting his commission in a spotless and blameless manner. (6:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

According to Jesus’ words, only his Father knew the time when the manifestation would take place. (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:6, 7) Christ’s appearance in glory is to occur at the time his Father had predetermined. Reasonably, then, his Father would be the one who would “show” the manifestation in its “own times.” The Father is the “happy” and “only Sovereign,” enjoying an unparalleled state of well-being, contentment, and satisfaction as the Supreme One. Although he has committed the kingship to his Son, the Father remains the Most High and so is the “King of kings and Lord of lords.” None of the deities that have been or are still revered possess immortality. They are, in fact, lifeless. Only the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the God who is immortal, dwelling in “unapproachable light, which no man has seen nor can see.” The divine glory is of such a nature that no human would be able to endure the sight. God’s greatness and magnificence is such that Paul rightly ascribed “honour” or dignity and eternal might or dominion to him. The apostle concluded the prayerful expression with “amen” (so be it). (6:15, 16; Exodus 33:20; see the Notes section on verse 15.)

6:17-19. Instructions for wealthy believers

Verses 17-18. The charge

Earlier, Paul had warned about the grave spiritual danger posed by a desire for riches and a love of money. Among the believers in Ephesus, some were wealthy and so he directed Timothy to aid them to keep the right perspective regarding themselves and their possessions. Timothy was to command the “rich

in the present age” not to be arrogant nor to set their hope on, or to place their trust in, “uncertain riches.” Believers should not assume a proud bearing on account of their means and regard themselves as superior to others because of their wealth and what they can accomplish with it. Present riches are uncertain, for they are temporary and cannot provide real security. Circumstances are subject to change, and war or persecution could lead to the loss of all material possessions. Like other believers, the wealthy should rest their hope on God, fully trusting him to supply their needs. He is the one who provides richly or abundantly everything that humans can enjoy. All good things are really his gifts. (6:17; Acts 14:16, 17; 17:28)

Wealthy believers were to use their assets well in doing what is good, being “rich in good works, generous, ready to share.” Through generous and willing giving to those in need, the wealthy would become “rich in good works.” (6:18)

Verse 19. The purpose

In this way, the rich would be “treasuring,” storing, or building for themselves a “good foundation for the future.” Their record of generous and rightly motivated giving would prove to be like a treasure deposited in heaven. It would be comparable to their having built a secure and lasting foundation, one that God would look upon favourably and reward richly. Through the proper use of their assets, they would be taking hold of the “real life” or, according to other manuscripts, the “eternal life,” signifying a never-ending relationship with the Father and his Son. (6:19)

6:20-21. Appeal to Timothy

Verse 20a. The positive injunction

Verses 20b-21. The negative warning

Timothy had been entrusted with the sound words of the truth that centred on Christ and what his death accomplished. Additionally, he had been commissioned to serve the community of believers. Paul’s admonition for him to guard what had been entrusted to him would include the deposit of sound teaching and his assignment of service. His being vigilant regarding what he had received would necessitate his “turning away from profane, empty expressions and the contradictions of the falsely called knowledge.” Those who promoted falsehood represented their views as valuable knowledge. Their opinions, however, proved to be no knowledge but defiling and empty, worthless, or ruinous teaching. The contradictions of this “falsely called knowledge” may refer to the strife and disputes to which erroneous views gave rise. (6:20)

By being taken in by this “falsely called knowledge,” some believers had deviated from the faith. They had allowed the baneful influence of erroneous teaching to turn them away from the truth that Jesus Christ had revealed through his words and deeds. (6:21)

Paul concluded with the prayerful thought, “Favor [be] with you.” The pronoun “you” is plural in many manuscripts, suggesting that the apostle’s desire was that the community of believers (and not just Timothy) be recipients of God’s gracious favour in the form of aid, guidance, and blessing. In other manuscripts, the “you” is singular. (6:21; see the Notes section.)

Notes:

In verse 5, many manuscripts end with the additional words, “From such [persons] turn away.”

After “snare” (in verse 9), a number of manuscripts add, “of the devil.”

The Greek text of verse 15 does not specify who would be doing the “showing.” Numerous modern translations are explicit in identifying God as the one. “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who at the due time will be revealed by God.” (NJB) “At the time God has already decided, he will send Jesus Christ back again.” (CEV) “God will make that happen at the right time.” (NCV) “The appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ which God will bring about in his own good time.” (REB)

In numerous manuscripts, the concluding prayerful expression ends with “amen” (so be it).

Questionnaire on 1 Timothy

1. Timothy and Titus were not pastors; rather they served as _____

2. What possibility answers most of the objections to the “timing” of the books (Pastoral Epistles)?

3. Where did Paul and Timothy probably meet?

4. What had Paul warned the Ephesian elders about in Acts 20? _____

5. Which weaknesses of Timothy was Paul very aware of?

6. How/when did Timothy die?

7. What is the purpose of 1 Timothy?

8. What is the date of 1 Timothy? _____

9. What is the greatest weapon against heresy? _____

10. What was the greatest witness the Ephesian church could make for Christ in their world?

11. What 3 things are needed to stay in spiritual shape?

First Timothy Chapter 1

1. When do people feel used?

2. For whom was the title *apostle* reserved?

3. What 3 things follow from the fact that the Bible is from God?

4. What does *soter* mean and who had applied it to himself in the first century?

5. When Paul speaks of Timothy as his “son” what does this father/son language primarily reflect?

6. What does the different language in the Pastoral Epistles (compared to the style and vocabulary of Paul’s other letters) indicate? Not different authors but rather different

7. What two key words does Paul use as a standard greeting in all his letters?

What key word that pictures God's loving-kindness is used only in 1-2 Timothy? _____

8. What does the phrase "*Jesus Christ our Lord*" point to?

9. Which goddess had a temple located in Ephesus?

10. What term did Paul use to refer to the unchanging truths of the gospel?

11. What two things can you do to protect yourself from the deception of false teachers? _____

12. What are genuine Christian teachers motivated by? _____

13. What does the word "sincere" literally mean? _____

14. What order does Paul's list of sins follow?

15. Which "alternate" lifestyle does Paul specifically condemn as sinful?

16. To what does the word *doctrine* refer?

17. Of what was Paul convinced?

18. To what 3 things did Paul's gratefulness extend?

19. When grace operates in a person's life, what does it result in?

20. What did Paul become increasingly more aware of the more he understood God's grace?

21. Why did Paul not hesitate to share his past?

22. What is the theological term that describes what we find in 1 Tim 1:17?

23. To what do the "prophecies" made about Timothy most likely refer?

24. What 2 things can you do to enable you to have a good conscience?

25. What does it mean to deliver someone to Satan?

And what is its ultimate purpose? _____

First Timothy Chapter 2

1. Paul both modeled and taught that prayer should always include

2. Why was Paul's command to pray for kings remarkable?

3. What does "Godliness" mean?

4. What two forms of "elitism" did Paul fight against?

5. What common belief did Judaism and Christianity share?

6. What 2 things were inseparably joined in the person of Jesus?

7. What does "ransom" mean?

8. To what 3 things was Paul appointed? _____

9. What does the phrase "*holy hands*" mean?

10. How were the Ephesian women to show their holy attitudes?

11. What must contemporary application of Paul's teaching appeal to?

12. What conception did Jesus personally shatter?

13. What amazing freedom does Paul affirm that (Christian) women have been given? _____

14. What does "quietness" mean?

15. What does a woman's submission not imply?

16. Briefly describe the two views (p.51) on why Paul says "Adam was formed first, then Eve."

17. Which of the views (top of p.52) does the commentary advocate?*

18. Which of the views of "saved through childbearing" does the commentary advocate?*

**For questions 17-18 briefly state/describe the view; do not just give a number.*

First Timothy Chapter 3

1. What guidelines should all believers strive to follow and why?

2. To whom/what does "overseer" refer?

3. How did Jesus define leadership? _____

4. What is the best interpretation of "husband of one wife"?

5. What is one of the most important tasks of any church leader?

6. What 4 characteristics must an overseer not have? _____

7. What do the qualifications for elders/deacons hinge on?

8. What is the best way to determine a person's ability to handle a large responsibility? _____

9. What is so wrong about pride?

10. What is “*the devil’s trap*”?

11. What was the role of deacons?

12. What do the “*deep truths*” of the faith refer to?

13. Who are the “women” referred to in 3:11?

14. What will a woman who has been faithfully exhibiting the character qualities of a believer find that she has been doing (though not formally)? _____

15. What is meant by the word “church” in this context?

16. Where does the short paragraph of 3:16 probably come from?

17. What is another translation for “gentiles” and what does it point to?

18. What does “received up in glory” refer to?

First Timothy Chapter 4

1. What did the Gnostics believe?

2. When did the End Times (“*later times*”) begin?

3. What is one of Satan’s many tactics to lead believers astray and divide the church? _____

4. Why did the false teachers (and later Gnostics) reject marriage and enjoying certain foods? _____

5. How did Jesus feel about different foods? What did he pronounce?

6. What does Genesis 1 say about all that God has created?

7. What is the basic mindset or attitude of a consumer (as over against a steward)? _____

8. What does it mean to “sanctify” something?

9. What point does the word “training” emphasize?

10. What does Paul mean, and not mean, by “godliness” (pp. 81-82)?

11. What “general disciplines” ought to be a part of every Christian’s life?

12. In what sense is Christ “the Savior of all people”?

13. To whom could the Greek word “young” (*neotes*) refer?

14. What would determine Timothy’s authority to lead?

15. In what 5 ways did Paul expect Timothy to be an example? _____

16. What do people need to know, understand, and constantly be reminded of?

17. What is one significant spiritual lesson that you have learned this past year?
(Hint: if you haven’t learned one ... then you have just learned one!)

18. What should we be on guard against?

First Timothy Chapter 5

1. To what Christ-like leadership style did Paul direct Timothy?

2. What is the most effective method for remaining above reproach with members of the opposite sex?

3. How will men who see women as fellow members in God's family treat them? _____

4. How does James 1:27 define true religion?

5. What plans have you made to care for your parents or grandparents?

6. Caring for whose needs pleases God?

7. What will those who choose to live for pleasure inevitably experience?

8. In caring for widows, the church that fails to _____ plans to _____ (fill in the blanks). This statement is true in every area, not just with widows!

9. What percentage of wives today will eventually become widows?

10. In what way might a young widow deny Christ or deny the faith?

11. What do you see yourself doing for Christ at age 70 and beyond?

12. What high calling of two specific roles does Paul envision for younger widows who remarry? _____

13. What does it mean to “turn aside after Satan”

14. What does “double honor” toward elders mean?

15. What does Paul’s “double reference” to Scripture show?

16. In 1 Tim 5:22 Paul says to Timothy “Keep yourself pure.” Take this idea and apply it to your relationships with members of the opposite sex. What can you do/not do to promote purity?

17. How many slaves do some estimate there were in the Roman empire?

18. To what relationship today can we apply Paul’s counsel to masters & slaves?

First Timothy Chapter 6

1. To what topic does Paul return in the closing section of his instructional letter (1 Timothy)?

2. What is the biblical basis for effective “orthopraxy” (right conduct)?

3. What word describes a person with an excessively favorable opinion of himself? _____

4. How does the American Dream differ from the biblical view of desiring wealth and financial success?

5. What does the heart of the gospel pulse with; and how do those who have been filled with the Spirit of God naturally demonstrate His presence in their lives? _____

6. What does the Bible consider to be true gain and true wealth?

7. What is the secret to contentment that Paul had discovered?

8. What is the biblical minimum of earthly things needed to be content?

9. What “industry” exists solely for the purpose of taking away our contentment? _____

10. What problems go hand in hand with the pursuit of wealth and the desire to be rich? _____

11. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary what do most people still believe? _____

12. What is it that has made many people acutely sensitive to God?

13. To what does “*righteousness*” refer?

14. Why is it that so many people who desire patience never become more patient? _____

15. What two things does Christian service, like athletics, require?

16. What are the two components of an “*active faith*”?

17. What is the most likely interpretation of the “command” that Paul exhorts Timothy to keep without spot or blame?

18. What two attributes of God show us that God can be trusted to control our lives? _____

19. God’s legitimate power and position require two responses from us:

20. What people are most in danger of having an incorrect attitude toward God?

21. How does Paul exhort the rich to use their wealth?

22. What was Timothy entrusted with that he must guard?

23. With what does Paul begin and end this letter? _____

24. What are the three most important things in the life of the church?



The Forum in Rome

2 Timothy Commentary

2 Timothy 1:1-18

1:1-5. The integrity of a faithful pastor

Verses 1-4. Paul's love and prayers for Timothy

When referring to himself as an “apostle of Christ Jesus through God’s will,” Paul acknowledged that his apostleship and the authority associated therewith came from God as an expression of his gracious favour. The words that follow (“according to the promise of the life that [is] in Christ Jesus”) could indicate that Paul’s call to be an apostle proved to be in harmony with God’s promise for humans to be reconciled to him and come to possess the newness of life that is made possible by coming to be at one with his Son. Another meaning may be that Paul, as an apostle through God’s will, had the commission to make known God’s promise about the life that is in Christ Jesus or the life that is to be enjoyed by being at one with him as a member of his body. (1:1)

Modern translations contain various interpretive renderings of verse 1. “God sent me to tell about the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.” (NCV) “He gave

me the promised life that Jesus Christ makes possible.” (CEV) “From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, whose promise of life is fulfilled in Christ Jesus.” (REB)

The apostle affectionately addressed Timothy as his “beloved child,” for he was like a father to him, having taught him by word and example. Paul then continued with the prayerful expression, “Favor, mercy, [and] peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” The gracious favor or unearned kindness would include the help and guidance the Father and his Son would provide. For Timothy to be a recipient of “mercy” would mean that he would continue to experience their compassionate care, Christ’s intercession, and his Father’s forgiveness. “Peace” would be the sense of well-being, tranquility, and security resulting from Timothy’s continuing to experience the love of God and Christ. (1:2)

Translators have chosen various ways to make the Greek text more explicit regarding Paul’s expression of thanks to God. “I thank God as I always mention you in my prayers, day and night.” (NCV) “Night and day I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my ancestors did.” (NJB) “Night and day I mention you in my prayers. I am always grateful for you, as I pray to the God my ancestors and I have served with a clear conscience.” (CEV) “I give thanks to the God of my forefathers, whom I worship with a clear conscience, when I mention you in my prayers as I do constantly night and day.” (REB) The context does not specifically indicate whether the rendering of thanks specifically relates to Timothy, more specifically to the good remembrance Paul had of him or the recollection he had of Timothy’s commendable faith. Possibly the giving of thanks is more general in nature, including everything for which the apostle was grateful. (1:3)

Paul’s forefathers were worshipers of YHWH, the only true God. So the apostle could speak of himself as serving God as did his ancestors, doing so with a pure conscience. The apostle earnestly endeavoured to conduct himself in an upright manner, preserving a clear conscience before God and fellow humans. “Night and day,” or always and at any time of the night or day, Paul, whenever praying, never failed to remember Timothy in his supplications. (1:3; compare Acts 23:1; 24:14-16.)

The apostle recalled the tears Timothy had shed. This must have occurred at a time they parted and when the possibility existed that Timothy might not see Paul again. Finding himself in prison and expecting to be condemned to death (1:8; 4:6), the apostle yearned to see his beloved fellow worker, knowing that this reunion would bring him joy. (1:4)

Verse 5. Paul's confidence in Timothy

Paul remembered Timothy's "unhypocritical faith," a genuine faith that was not just a mere expression of belief but manifested itself in positive action that honoured God and Jesus Christ. The faith that was "in" Timothy had first resided in, or been the inmost possession of, his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Paul expressed the confidence that the same genuine faith was also "in" Timothy, existing as part of his inmost self. (1:5)

1:6-8. The afflictions of a faithful pastor

Verses 6-7. Afflictions demand a spirit of courage

"For [this] reason" (in view of Timothy's having a sincere faith), Paul reminded him to stir into flame the gracious gift of God. Timothy had come to possess this gift when Paul laid his hands on him, designating him for special service. Based on Acts 16:1-3 and the apostle's earlier comments in 1 Timothy 4:14, Paul chose Timothy as his fellow worker and, with elders from the community of believers joining him, laid his hands on Timothy, thereby appointing him to special service in Christ's cause. The gracious gift of God that Timothy then received equipped him to fulfil the commission for which he had been designated. This gift was one he should then use to the fullest extent possible, stirring it up into a blaze as one would a smouldering fire. (1:6)

Timothy was not to allow anything to hinder him from making full use of his gift. "For," as Paul continued, "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sensibleness." The God-given spirit may refer to the holy spirit or to the spirit or disposition believers come to have on account of their having received the holy spirit. Through God's spirit, believers are made bold or courageous, not holding back from declaring and living the faith that has Christ as its focus. Cowardice, fear, or dread is the very opposite of what God's spirit produces. Unlike the weakness and timidity that is associated with cowardice, the God-given spirit is one of power, making it possible for believers to withstand the strains and pressures to which they are subjected on account of their faith. Love drives fear away. Motivated by love, the individual is not restrained from taking action, fearing possible personal difficulties or even harm because of selflessly coming to the aid of those in need or on account of advancing Christ's cause. Cowardice clouds good judgment, resulting in inaction or inappropriate behaviour. The God-given spirit produces soundness of mind and action that is right under the circumstances, reflecting good judgment, reasonableness, or self-control. (1:7)

Verse 8. Afflictions as part of faithful gospel testimony

In keeping with the disposition that God's spirit produces, Paul urged Timothy, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me, his prisoner." On account of bearing testimony regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, Timothy would face ridicule, misrepresentation, mistreatment, and suffering. The demeaning and hateful treatment to which he would be subjected was not to cause him shame, for it was an honour to suffer in the service of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Paul's confinement had resulted from his faithfully serving in the interests of God's Son. For this reason, the apostle spoke of himself as the Lord's prisoner. Paul considered it an honour to endure distress for Christ, and so did not want Timothy to be ashamed of him in his situation. Instead, he desired that Timothy share with him in suffering for the good news about Christ. Timothy's suffering "according to the power of God" would signify his enduring the distressing circumstances with God's help or with the power he supplies by means of his spirit. (1:8)

1:9-11. The appointment of a faithful pastor

Verses 9-10. The gospel described

Paul and Timothy had good reason for enduring, considering everything that God, through Christ, had done for them and all other fellow believers. He had saved them, forgiving them of their sins and delivering them from the condemnation to which sin leads. His call was an invitation for them to become his reconciled children. In its being a "holy calling," it had as its purpose their living "holy," pure, or upright lives. The call had not been extended on the basis of "works" or any personal merit on the part of the called ones. It was an expression of God's own purpose (originating from himself) and favour or unearned kindness. He granted his gracious favour "in Christ Jesus before eternal times." From the very beginning and before the ages began, God purposed that humans would be at one with his Son. Whatever the Father expresses to be his will is as good as accomplished. Thus when he, in the indefinite past, purposed to grant his gracious favour to humans, all those who would come to be believers in the future could be spoken of as having been recipients thereof before "eternal times." (1:9)

With the coming of the Saviour Christ Jesus to the earth, God's gracious favor was fully revealed. Jesus' life and activity, including his sacrificial death, made it clear how humans could be forgiven of their sins, delivered from the condemnation to which sin leads, and be reconciled to God as his beloved children. By his own death, Christ Jesus broke the power of death. All who respond in faith, accepting his having surrendered his life for them, come to enjoy a newness of life as persons forgiven of their sins and no longer under

condemnation. They come into possession of eternal life, the life of an enduring relationship with God and his Son and which life will ultimately be enjoyed in the sinless state for all eternity. (1:10)

Verse 11. The appointment illustrated

“Through the evangel,” the “good news” or the message that he proclaimed and which his life revealed, Jesus Christ brought life and incorruption to light. For the first time, humans could learn how they could come to have the real life, the eternal life, and cease to be subject to death and corruption. With specific reference to this evangel or good news, Paul was appointed to serve as a proclaimer, apostle, and teacher. He proclaimed the message about Jesus Christ and what he accomplished through his death. Paul faithfully discharged his commission as an apostle, one specifically sent forth to advance Christ’s interests. He also functioned as a teacher, imparting instruction about Jesus Christ and his example and teaching in a manner that listeners could understand and apply. (1:10, 11)

1:12-14. The holy confidences of a faithful pastor

Verse 12. The testimony of assurance

It was because Paul had advanced the good news about Jesus Christ as a proclaimer, apostle, and teacher that he then suffered as a prisoner. His distressing circumstances, however, did not make him ashamed, thinking that he might have been wrong in the course he had pursued. (1:12)

Paul knew the one whom he had believed. He had put his faith or full trust in God’s Son, confident that his having done so would never lead to disappointment. The apostle did not doubt that Jesus Christ would be able to guard what he had entrusted to him “until that day.” If the reference is to what Paul had entrusted to Christ, it would be the “treasure” he had laid up in heaven through his loyal service to him. On “that day,” which would denote the time when Jesus Christ would return in glory, Paul’s record of faithful service would prove to be like a secure trust under Christ’s guardianship and would be rewarded. (Compare Matthew 6:19-21.) Another possibility is that Jesus Christ would guard what had been entrusted to Paul, assuring that he would fulfil his commission and be found approved on “that day.” (1:12)

Verses 13-14. The results of assurance

From Paul, Timothy heard “healthful words,” or sound teaching about God and Christ. The apostle urged him to hold to the “pattern” or “standard” of these words, making sure that he conducted himself accordingly and imparted sound teaching to others. Timothy’s faithful adherence to the pattern, standard, or norm

of the “healthful words” was to be “in the faith and love that [are] in Christ Jesus.” This could mean that Timothy’s attachment to sound teaching was to be with the kind of faith or trust and love that the Son of God exemplified while on earth. Another meaning could be that Timothy, in his adherence to the healthful words, was to live a life of faith and love as a believer possessing these qualities because of being “in” or at one with Christ Jesus. (1:13)

Paul admonished Timothy to guard the “good trust,” the precious treasure of healthful words or sound teaching, with the aid of the holy spirit that dwells in believers. The spirit’s influence is holy or pure. Therefore, by letting the spirit be the controlling power in his life, Timothy would have continued being exemplary in his conduct and teaching. (1:14)

1:15-18. The trials and joys of a faithful pastor

Verse 15. The trials

“All” the ones from the Roman province of Asia (an area that is now in the western part of Turkey) who deserted Paul would not have been all the believers in cities of that Roman province but persons who were then in Rome and could have been of help to him. Prominent among those who had forsaken him were Phygelus and Hermogenes. Likely, because of fearing adverse consequences, they failed to render aid to Paul while he was imprisoned or when he made his defence. At the time the apostle wrote, Timothy already knew about what certain ones from the province of Asia had done. (1:15)

Verses 16-18. The joys

Unlike Hermogenes, Phygelus, and others who forsook Paul, Onesiphorus searched diligently for him when he came to Rome and succeeded in finding him. Onesiphorus was not ashamed to identify himself with the chained prisoner Paul, fearing that he might be endangering his freedom or safety. He often refreshed the apostle, probably not just by his personal presence but also by attending to his needs. (1:16, 17)

At the time Paul wrote, Onesiphorus may no longer have been alive, for later greetings are conveyed only to the household of Onesiphorus. (4:19) Additionally, the apostle made his prayerful expression for the household because of what Onesiphorus had done for him, often refreshing him and not being ashamed of his situation as a chained prisoner. “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus.” The mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ would include his continued compassionate care and concern for the members of the household. (1:16)

Paul deeply appreciated what Onesiphorus had done for him, looking for him in Rome until he found him. The apostle's prayerful expression for Onesiphorus was that the Lord Jesus Christ would grant him "mercy on that day." "That day" would be the time when Jesus would return in glory and would show his mercy or his great kindness to believers by having them join him as his approved ones in the heavenly realm. It was not just while in Rome that Onesiphorus had proved himself to be a loving brother. As Paul mentioned, Timothy knew about how much service Onesiphorus had rendered in Ephesus. (1:18)

Notes:

After "teacher" (in verse 11), many manuscripts add "of nations." Instead of "teacher," a few manuscripts read "servant."

The reference to what had been entrusted to Timothy (verse 14) provides a basis for concluding that verse 12 may be understood to mean that Jesus Christ would guard what had been entrusted to Paul. The Greek text could be understood to have this meaning or to apply to what Paul had entrusted to Christ, and this is reflected in the renderings of modern translations. "I know whom I have trusted, and am confident of his power to keep safe what he has put into my charge until the great day." (REB) "I know the one I have faith in, and I am sure that he can guard until the last day what he has trusted me with." (CEV) "I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him." (NRSV)

2 Timothy 2:1-26

2:1-3. The message of grace and spiritual warfare

Verses 1-2. Strength is required to proclaim the gospel

Many, out of fear, had abandoned Paul in his time of distress. Apparently for this reason, he admonished Timothy to continue drawing strength from "the favour that [is] in Christ Jesus." Again, affectionately, the apostle called his beloved fellow worker "my child," for he had been like a father to him, teaching him by word and example. In the sphere of gracious favour or kindness, which includes all the help and guidance available through Christ, Timothy would be able to acquire strength. This favour is referred to as being "in Christ Jesus" probably because it is granted to all who are at one with him. (2:1)

Timothy had repeatedly heard Paul's teaching. According to a literal reading of the Greek text, he heard the things the apostle taught "through many witnesses." This could mean that Timothy heard these things in the presence of many witnesses, from numerous other believers besides Paul, or as the teaching to which genuine believers adhered and which they made known. Whereas the evangel or good news about Christ had been directly revealed to Paul, the

message he proclaimed did not differ from that of the many witnesses whom the Son of God had taught while on earth. (Galatians 1:15-23; 2:6-9) So, in an indirect way, the things Timothy heard from Paul would have been what he also heard from many other believers. The apostle asked that Timothy pass on what he had learned to faithful or trustworthy men who would be able to teach others. (2:2)

Verse 3. Preaching grace arouses conflict

In carrying out his commission, Timothy, while faced with difficult circumstances, would also be engaging in a battle against false teachings and corrupt practices. As a “good soldier of Christ Jesus,” he would suffer hardships. (2:3)

2:4-7. Separation and success in God’s work

Verse 4. The necessity of separation

Verses 5-7. The necessity of obedience and effort

A Roman soldier could not be involved in the pursuits of ordinary life, but had to give his undivided attention to his duties to be pleasing to his superior. An athlete would not receive the victory wreath if he failed to follow the rules. The farmer who laboured would be the one to partake of the fruits, being the first to enjoy a share of the harvested crops. (2:4-6)

Paul wanted Timothy to give attention to what he had said about the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer, drawing the appropriate lesson there from. The apostle added, “The Lord will grant you comprehension in everything.” As he wanted the more important spiritual aspect to be understood, Paul was confident that the Lord Jesus Christ would enable Timothy to derive the full benefit from what he had written. Just as there were requirements soldiers, athletes, and farmers had to fulfil to attain the desired results, Timothy would need to discharge his responsibilities faithfully to be pleasing to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, sharing in all the privileges and blessings that would be bestowed on all who are found to be approved. (2:7)

2:8-10. Suffering and soul-winning

Verses 8-9a. The cause for the suffering

Prominent features of the good news that Paul wanted Timothy to recall were the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his being from the line of King David (literally, “from the seed of David”). When using the expression “my evangel,” Paul meant the message about Jesus Christ that he proclaimed. In his preaching

the evangel or good news, he always emphasized that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The resurrection undeniably proved that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and that only through him can humans be forgiven of their sins and be liberated from the condemnation to which sin leads. The fact that Jesus came to be in the line of David established that he is the foretold Christ or Messiah. (2:8; Acts 13:16-39)

Verses 9b-10. The results of the suffering

Paul was then suffering imprisonment as if he had been a criminal. His confinement had resulted from his activity as a proclaimer of the message about Jesus Christ. Although he himself was bound and deprived of freedom of movement, the “word of God” (the message that focused on Christ as the one through whom reconciliation with God is possible) was not bound. Other believers continued to spread the good news extensively in the Greco-Roman world. (2:9; compare Philippians 1:12-14.)

The apostle did not doubt that having the approval of God and Christ would result in lasting blessings. So he was willing to endure everything for the sake of the elect (believers whom God had chosen to be his people). His activity among the non-Jewish peoples had led to his imprisonment, and so it was for those who became believers that he endured distress and hardship. Moreover, the apostle’s willingness to endure suffering would encourage fellow believers to do likewise when subjected to trials and difficulties for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul earnestly desired that, on account of what he was prepared to endure in the advancement of Christ’s cause, these chosen ones would obtain the “salvation [that is] in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2:10)

Salvation, or forgiveness of sins and liberation from the condemnation to which sin leads, is only available “in” Christ. The reference to salvation being “in” Christ may signify that he is the one through whom deliverance from sin and condemnation is effected. Another possible meaning is that all who rest their faith on him are saved or delivered from sin and condemnation. In the ultimate sense, the fullness of salvation will be experienced in the sinless state. Apparently for this reason, being saved is linked to “eternal glory.” Believers will share in the glory, magnificence, or splendour of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2:10)

2:11-14. Union with Christ and coming glory

Verse 11. The believer's position of union

Verse 12a. The believer's experience of union

12b-14. The problem of the believer's unfaithfulness

The “word” or message conveyed in the composition that Paul next quoted is “faithful,” dependable, or trustworthy. This “word” appears to have been part of an early Christian composition. “For if we died [with him], we will also live [with him]. If we endure, we will also reign [with him]. If we deny [him], he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.” (2:11-13)

Upon putting faith in Christ Jesus and, at the time of their baptism, acknowledging him as the one through whom forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with his Father have been made possible, believers become members of Christ's body. As members of his body, they share in his experiences as their head. Christ died, and members of his body then died with him. Just as Christ rose from the dead, believers, at the time of their baptism die with reference to their old self and are raised to a newness of life as God's approved children. Ultimately, this will mean enjoying a never-ending relationship with Christ (and his Father) in the sinless state. (2:11)

Believers who faithfully endure trials and hardships for the sake of Christ will also reign with him, receiving their share in the realm where he rules as king. Those who deny him, disowning him as the Lord who died for them and whose example and teaching they are to follow, will not be acknowledged as belonging to him. The Lord Jesus Christ will disown them, refusing to acknowledge having any relationship with them. (2:12)

If believers prove unfaithful, ceasing to live a life that harmonizes with his example and teaching, Jesus Christ does not change. He remains faithful, always trustworthy and dependable as the head of his corporate body, the community of believers. It is impossible for Christ to deny himself. Never will he prove false. He is the same “yesterday, today, and forever.” (2:13; Hebrews 13:8)

In keeping with what he had just said, Paul asked that Timothy remind fellow believers of their being willing to suffer hardships for the sake of Christ and to remain faithful to him as their Lord. Additionally, Timothy was to charge them solemnly before God (the Lord, according to many manuscripts) not to fight over words. (2:14)

Wrangling about the significance of certain words would not benefit anyone and would have a ruinous or upsetting effect on listeners. Fights over certain terms distract from, obscure, or distort the message that the words as a whole are intended to convey. Those who engage in disputes tend to be more interested in gaining the best of an argument than they are in advancing the cause of truth. Controversies over words raise doubts in the minds of listeners, causing them to question whether the things they have learned are really true and whether anyone can be trusted. What they may have once valued and appreciated comes to be marred by unsettling feelings of uncertainty. (2:14)

2:15-19. Bible study and godly living

Verses 15-18. A discerning use of Scripture – the antidote to error

Paul urged Timothy to be earnest in seeking to present himself as one who is approved before God, as a worker who has nothing of which to be ashamed, using the “word of truth” aright. The Greek word that may be understood to mean “to use aright” is *orthotoméō*, literally signifying the act of cutting a way or path in a straight manner. In relation to the “word of truth” (the message about Christ and what his Father has accomplished through him), the expression *orthotoméō* may denote teaching the message aright or expounding it soundly. By being exemplary in avoiding fights over words and doing his best to teach and proclaim the truth that Jesus Christ revealed, Timothy would have had no cause for shame because of having misrepresented God or Christ. Through diligent adherence to sound teaching, he would prove himself to be an approved worker to God. (2:15)

Timothy needed to avoid “profane, empty expressions,” mere idle talk that did nothing to encourage others to live an upright life. Those who engage in profane babbling end up progressively becoming more ungodly, and their ruinous talk spreads “like gangrene,” with its pernicious influence wreaking havoc to the faith of all who are deceived thereby. (2:16, 17)

Paul singled out Hymenaeus and Philetus as being among those who engaged in profane chatter. These two men had strayed from the truth, claiming that the resurrection had already occurred. Although Paul did not include the specifics of their views, Timothy would have known just what falsehoods they were spreading. Their teaching had upset or undermined the faith of some believers, apparently causing them to doubt that there would actually be a future resurrection. (2:17, 18)

Verse 19. Bible study – the key to godly living

Despite the destructive effect of false teaching, Paul was confident that the “solid foundation of God” continues to stand. Timothy likely understood Christ to be the foundation or the cornerstone of the foundation that included the apostles. (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19, 20) The designation “foundation of God,” when applied to Christ, would fit his being identified as the “living stone” that God laid and on which the community of believers is built. (1 Peter 2:4-6) This foundation bears an inscription (literally, “has this seal”), “The Lord knows those who are his,” and “Let everyone calling on [literally, ‘naming’] the name of the Lord abstain from unrighteousness.” The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledges as his own all who are truly built on him as the foundation, and they are identified by their upright conduct, shunning all unrighteousness, or attitudes, words, and deeds that are contrary to his example and teaching. Their “naming” or calling on the name of the Lord signifies their acknowledging him as their Lord and living in harmony therewith. (2:19)

2:20-23. Separation and spiritual usefulness

Verses 20-21. The principle illustrated

Whereas the foundation is sure and the community of believers constitutes a sanctuary on this foundation, this does not mean that all who identify themselves as part of that community truly belong to it. As the inscription reveals, the Lord is the one who knows his own. Therefore, not all professing believers are necessarily good associates. Paul called to Timothy’s attention that various kinds of vessels or utensils could be found in a large house. There would be precious vessels made from gold or silver, and others fashioned from wood or clay. The precious vessels would be regarded as honorable, often being reserved for use on special occasions. Vessels or utensils that lacked honor would be the ones made from inferior materials and would be used for common or for menial utilitarian purposes. (2:20)

With seeming reference to the community of believers, which includes both honourable and dishonourable vessels, Paul emphasized the need for cleansing oneself from the dishonourable ones, probably meaning not to allow oneself to be contaminated by them. This would be by distancing oneself from them and not making them one’s intimate companions. All who remain free from the defilement of wrong conduct and teaching would prove themselves to be honourable or noble vessels, “sanctified” (set apart as holy or pure) and “useful” to their “owner.” The owner could be the Lord Jesus Christ who bought them with his precious blood. As his approved disciples, Jesus Christ would be able to use them to further his interests, and they would be prepared or fitted for “every good work,” which could include any noble service that he assigned or that

honoured him. It is also possible that the “owner” is God (as a number of translations make explicit), for he purchased humans with the blood of his own Son. (2:21; compare Acts 20:28.)

The Greek text of verse 21 is not specific in saying that one should keep clean from dishonourable vessels. It literally reads, “If, then, one should have cleansed himself from these.” This has been rendered as applying either to things or to people. “All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work.” (NRSV) “All who make themselves clean from evil will be used for special purposes. They will be made holy, useful to the Master, ready to do any good work.” (NCV) “If a man cleanses himself from the latter [the ones for ignoble purposes], he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.” (NIV) *Wenn sich jemand von Menschen fern hält, die einem Gefäß mit unreinem Inhalt gleichen, wird er ein Gefäß sein, das ehrenvollen Zwecken dient. Er steht Gott zur Verfügung und ist ihm, dem Hausherrn, nützlich, bereit, all das Gute zu tun, das dieser ihm aufträgt.* (If someone keeps himself distant from people who are like a vessel with unclean contents, he will be a vessel that serves honorable purposes. He is available to God and is useful to him, the Master of the house, ready to perform all the good that this [Master] assigns to him.) (*Neue Genfer Übersetzung*, German).

Verses 22-23. The principle enunciated

At the time Paul wrote to him, Timothy was still comparatively young (probably in his late thirties). Therefore, the apostle admonished him to flee from the desires or passions that are particularly prominent among younger men. The exhortation to flee would signify that Timothy should quickly avoid any situation that might tempt him to yield to a wrong desire. His earnest objective was to be the pursuit of righteousness or uprightness, faith (continued growth in his faith in God and Christ and probably also personal trustworthiness), love (compassionate concern for those in need and a willingness to forgo personal interests for the benefit of others), peace (an inner sense of tranquillity and the furtherance of good relationships with others). These noble qualities were to be pursued in association with exemplary fellow believers who called “upon the Lord out of a clean heart.” These fellow believers would be persons who, in attitude, word, and deed, acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Lord and were motivated to serve him out of the purity of their hearts or their inmost selves. (2:22)

Timothy needed to shun foolish and ignorant “seekings,” “searchings,” or questionings, not allowing himself to be drawn into idle inquiries that produced

nothing beneficial or useful but only gave rise to fights, controversies, or disputes. (2:23)

2:24-26. Spiritual victory

Verses 24-25a. The servant of Jesus Christ

Verses 25b-26. The servant's conquests over Satan.

As a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, Timothy did not need to fight, engaging in heated or angry arguments or debates. Instead, a servant of God's Son "needs to be gentle" or kindly "toward all," not responding with anger or harshness when encountering resistance to sound teaching. Being able to teach would denote being able to impart instruction in a manner that others could understand and that would not stir up needless controversy. In the event certain ones proved to be unresponsive or resistant to truth, seeking to wrangle, the one doing the teaching was to exercise restraint, not lashing out in anger or resentment but remaining patient under the unfavourable circumstances. (2:24)

When dealing with those who are resistant or not rightly inclined, a servant of Christ was not to respond in a harsh manner but instruct or correct with mildness or gentleness. The objective would have been to appeal to such ones in a kindly manner, hoping that God may grant them a spirit of repentance, leading them back to the truth from which they had strayed. The response of the one earnestly trying to instruct or correct in a mild way could motivate the wayward ones to think seriously about their course of action and make them amenable to the operation of God's spirit, motivating them to repent and once again to know the truth as Christ lived and taught it. On the other hand, a harsh and unloving response could easily lead to a hardening in the attitude of straying individuals, making it even more difficult for them to change. (2:25)

The good effect of mildness or gentleness on wayward ones may cause them to come to their senses and escape from the devil's snare. The devil had caught them alive (*zogréo*). If the Greek term *zogréo* here has the basic meaning of "capture alive" and not just "catch" or "capture," the expression could suggest that the straying ones had been trapped as believers who were not dead in trespasses and sins, making their plight as wayward believers graver than that of unbelievers. (2:26)

The concluding words may be understood to indicate that those who had strayed were caught to do the devil's will or that their getting free from the devil's snare would be to do God's will. (2:26) Both meanings are found in the renderings of modern translations. "And they may wake up and escape from the trap of the devil, who catches them to do what he wants." (NCV) "Thus they may come to

their senses and escape from the devil's snare in which they have been trapped and held at his will." (REB) "They have been trapped by the devil, and he makes them obey him, but God may help them escape." (CEV) "And that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, to do his (that is, God's) will." (NRSV, footnote) "They may come to their senses and be rescued from the power of the devil by the servant of the Lord and set to work for God's purposes." (J. B. Phillips)

Notes:

The manuscript evidence for verse 14 does not make it possible to determine whether "Lord" or "God" represents the original reading. A few manuscripts say "Christ."

In verse 19, the first part of the inscription ("The Lord knows those who are his") is nearly the same as the extant Septuagint reading of Numbers 16:5, where the reference is to God. Isaiah 26:13, in the Septuagint, contains words that parallel the second part of the inscription ("we name your name"). Paul, however, did not introduce either part as a quotation nor did he use the words as supporting quotations. Therefore, the expressions he chose may be regarded as reflecting his thorough acquaintance with the words contained in the Greek translation of the sacred writings, and his reference to the Lord may be understood to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 3:1-17

3:1-5. The apostasy

Verse 1. The time of apostasy

Paul wanted Timothy to "know" or to be aware of future developments that would seriously affect the community of believers. The apostle mentioned that difficult or stressful times lay ahead, and these hard times would characterize the "last days." Believers in the first century understood that a new age had dawned with Jesus' coming to the earth and that they were then living in the "last days" that would culminate in his return in glory. (Acts 2:17-21; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:20) Paul, though, used the future tense when mentioning the moral corruption that would come to exist among professing believers, and the moral breakdown is what would make life difficult. This suggests that these "last days" designate the period just before Jesus Christ's arrival with power and great magnificence. That the apostle's description relates to professing believers is evident from his later reference (3:5) to their having an outward "form of godliness," which would not apply to the world of mankind in a general sense. (3:1)

Verses 2-5. The nature of the apostates

Instead of having genuine concern for fellow humans, individuals would be lovers of themselves, selfishly focused on their own interests. They would be lovers of money (literally, lovers of silver), determined to increase their possessions with no regard for any ill effect their inordinate striving for money might have on them or others. People would be boasters, putting on a pretense and making exaggerated claims about themselves and their accomplishments. Through their bragging, they would make others feel like nobodies. They would be haughty, elevating themselves and despising or demeaning persons they considered to have a lower status in society. As “blasphemers,” they would be individuals who used abusive language. Youths would be disobedient to their parents, refusing to listen to sound advice and manifesting disrespect and defiance. A spirit of ingratitude would prevail, with individuals showing no appreciation, and people would have no regard for what is holy or pure. (3:2)

The moral breakdown would be reflected in the absence of the love or tender feelings that should exist among family members. People would be unwilling to resolve conflicts, refusing to reconcile or to come to amiable solutions or agreements. They would be slanderers, defaming fellow humans. Individuals would be unbridled in their conduct. They would be brutal, ruthless, or violent, and would have no love or appreciation for the things that are good or morally excellent but would be hostile to them. (3:3)

People could not be trusted, for they would be betrayers, resorting to treachery either to protect themselves or to gain personal advantage. They would be rash, reckless, or thoughtless, puffed up with conceit or deluded, and “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” Their whole object in living, instead of being concerned about doing God’s will, would be to pursue whatever satisfied their sensual desires. (3:4)

5b. The attitude toward apostates

Professing believers would have a form of godliness or piety, suggesting that they would be engaging in the outward forms of worship as a matter of routine or ritual. Yet, their disposition, words, and deeds would reveal that the transforming power of godliness had not taken root. Theirs would be an empty profession, with no evidence of a faith that motivated upright conduct and caring deeds. Thus they would be denying the power of true godliness. (3:5)

At the time Paul wrote to Timothy, certain ones in the community of believers were already manifesting the divinely disapproved traits that characterized persons who merely had a “form of godliness.” Therefore, the apostle urged

Timothy, “From these turn away,” avoiding such corrupt individuals and distancing himself from them. (3:5)

3:6-9. Results of Apostasy

Verses 6-7. Immortality and false intellectualism

In the Greco-Roman world, many women had little exposure to the outside world and their opportunities for learning were significantly fewer than those of men who had the same social standing. The limitations that society imposed on women made them more susceptible than men to be won over by unsound reasoning. That there was a desire to keep women less educated is reflected in Satire VI of Juvenal (Roman poet and satirist of the first/second century CE). He wrote, “Let [a woman] not know all history; let there be some things that she does not understand.” “I hate a woman,” Juvenal continued, “who observes all the rules and laws of language, who like an antiquary quotes verses that I never heard of, and corrects her unlettered female friends for slips of speech that no man need trouble himself about.”

From among those whom Timothy was to avoid were active proponents of error who appear to have regarded women as being more readily persuaded than men. In order to get access to the women in the household, they slyly sought to gain entrance into the homes. Once they were in a home, they would focus their attention on women who were not firmly grounded in the truth about God and Christ and who were insecure about their standing with God. Paul described the women whom the teachers of falsehood made their captives or victims as “simple women [*gynaikáron*], loaded down with sins, led by various desires, always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (3:6, 7)

The term *gynaikáron* is a diminutive form of the Greek word for woman and was used in a pejorative manner. Translators have variously rendered the expression as “silly women” (NCV, NJB, NRSV, REB), “weak-willed women” (NIV), “weak women” (NASB), “idle women” (HCSB), “foolish women” (NLB), and “vulnerable women” (NLT). In being designated as “loaded down with sins,” these women appear to have been burdened with a guilty conscience because of the life they had led. At the same time, they were subject to various desires that likely made them prone to accept flattery and special attention from men. Corrupt teachers were able to exploit the weaknesses of these women. (3:6)

Although they seem to have wanted to learn new things and were always ready to listen to those who presumed to be teachers, the women never came to a knowledge of the truth. They never really embraced the truth that Jesus Christ

revealed by what he did and taught. They remained devoid of the transforming power of this truth in their lives. (3:7)

The advocates of error were like Jannes and Jambres who resisted Moses. Although not mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures, these men were widely known as having been practisers of magic in ancient Egypt. Both Origen (*Against Celsus*, IV, 51) and Eusebius mentioned a certain Numenius as referring to Jannes and Jambres in the time of Moses. Quoting Numenius, Eusebius (*Preparation for the Gospel*, IX, 8) wrote, “And next in order came Jannes and Jambres, Egyptian sacred scribes, men judged to have no superiors in the practice of magic, at the time when the Jews were being driven out of Egypt.” In his *Natural History* (XXX, ii), Pliny the Elder includes Jannes as one from whom a branch of magic was derived. Like Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses, the teachers of error were “corrupted in mind, disapproved respecting the faith.” These proponents of falsehood did not adhere to the truth that Jesus Christ exemplified in his life and teaching. They opposed this truth by their words and deeds. What they taught proved to be a product of twisted reasoning and, in no respect, did they represent genuine faith or trust in God and Christ. Neither in their conduct nor in their teaching did these men uphold the common faith of the community of believers. Unlike the teaching that promoted genuine faith that produced noble conduct and compassionate concern for persons in need, their teaching was base, worthless, defiling, and destructive. (3:8)

Paul confidently looked ahead to the time these teachers of error would be exposed as were Jannes and Jambres when they were forced to acknowledge the power of God and the limits of their magical arts. (Compare Exodus 8:18, 19.) The apostle did not doubt that they would fail to make progress in spreading their error and that (as had happened in the case of Jannes and Jambres) their senselessness would become evident to “all,” probably meaning the whole community of genuine believers. All who followed Jesus’ example and teaching would have been able to identify the dissident teachers as persons who expounded foolish, worthless, and ruinous ideas. (3:9)

3:10-13. Persecution and apostasy

Verses 10-11. Apostasy leads to persecution

Paul had faithfully carried out his commission in advancing the interests of Jesus Christ, and Timothy had “followed” (*parakolouthéo*) the apostle’s teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings. (3:10, 11)

The Greek term *parakolouthéo* can convey the thought of following closely, conforming to someone's example by paying careful attention to it. While Timothy did imitate Paul as the apostle imitated Christ, he would not have been a sharer in the kind of persecutions the apostle endured in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. In the present context, therefore, *parakolouthéo* may have the sense of carefully observing or taking note of. (3:10) This significance is often found in modern translations. "But you, my son, have observed closely my teaching and manner of life." (REB) "But you, Timothy, have known intimately both what I have taught and how I have lived." (J. B. Phillips) "Timothy, you know what I teach and how I live." (CEV)

As the apostle's fellow worker, Timothy would have been able to hear his teaching and faithfully to impart it to others. He would have been fully aware of the way Paul lived his life, his purpose in being totally devoted to the Son of God and his Father and to be faithful in discharging his divinely granted commission, and his faith or his unqualified trust in God and Christ. In the apostle's interactions with others and the manner in which he dealt with unfavourable or distressing circumstances, Timothy would have been able to note his patience or forbearance. Paul set an example in love, foregoing personal rights for the sake of others and being self-sacrificing, doing everything within his power to aid fellow believers and never to be a burden to them. Timothy would have known the hardships and difficulties Paul endured as he travelled extensively to make known the good news about Christ. (3:10; compare Acts 20:18-24; 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.)

The apostle often found himself experiencing persecution and suffering because of his activity in advancing Christ's interests. Repeatedly his life was threatened, and he endured abuse, mistreatment, and imprisonment. In Pisidian Antioch, Jewish opposers succeeded in inciting prominent women and men against Paul and Barnabas, and both of them were driven out of the city. (Acts 13:50) Thereafter, for a considerable time in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas helped many Jews and non-Jews to become believers. The unbelieving Jews then became hostile and stirred up the non-Jewish population against them. Upon learning of an attempt to stone them, Paul and Barnabas were forced to flee to Lystra and then to Derbe. (Acts 14:1-6) As Lystra appears to have been Timothy's home, he may have learned about what happened to Paul and Barnabas from believers who had firsthand knowledge, or he may even have been an actual witness. After Paul healed a man who had been lame from birth, the people concluded that he and Barnabas were gods. The priest of Zeus and the awe-struck crowd wanted to offer a sacrifice to them, and Paul and Barnabas were scarcely able to restrain them from doing so. Later, Jewish opposers from Antioch and Iconium arrived in the city and stirred up the populace against Paul. They then stoned

him and dragged him outside the city, thinking that he was dead. When a group of believers thereafter surrounded him, he got up, entered the city, and then left the next day with Barnabas. (Acts 14:1-20) Paul credited the Lord Jesus Christ with having rescued him from all the persecutions to which he had been subjected. (3:11)

Verses 12-13. Godliness and persecution

Based on the experience of believers generally, particularly his own, and the teaching of Jesus Christ (John 15:20), Paul could tell Timothy that all who wanted to live a godly life “in Christ Jesus,” or as persons at one with him as members of his body, would be persecuted. (3:12)

Wicked men and impostors, however, would progressively go from bad to worse, “deceiving and being deceived.” Such morally corrupt individuals made a pretence of being believers. They were self-deceived, imagining their views to be right. Both in conduct and teaching, they would depart farther and farther from the example and teaching of God’s Son. With the false reasoning by means of which they had deluded themselves, they would be able to mislead others. (3:13)

3:14-17. Scripture and apostasy

Verses 14-15. The role of Scripture in Timothy’s life

In view of the corrupt influence of proponents of error, Paul urged Timothy to hold fast to what he had learned and come to firmly believe, “knowing from whom he had learned” everything. Those who taught Timothy were not deceivers but trustworthy persons who loved him and were concerned about his well-being. His initial exposure to sound teaching about God came from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. (1:5) Later, he continued to learn from others in the community of believers and, especially, from Paul. (3:14)

From infancy, or from his earliest recollection as a youngster, Timothy had known the “sacred writings.” He must have come to this early knowledge through the efforts of his godly grandmother and mother. The sacred writings were read in the Jewish synagogues (commonly from the Greek translation in areas other than the land of Israel), and that is where Lois and Eunice regularly could have heard what they would have been able to impart to young Timothy. These sacred writings could make him wise “for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” The sacred writings pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah, how forgiveness of sins would be made possible through him, and how reconciliation with God would thus be effected. (Compare Isaiah 53:1-11; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27.) Accordingly, all the essentials for salvation or deliverance

from sin had been revealed in the holy writings, requiring only that individuals come to know Jesus as the promised Messiah or Christ and to put faith in him. (3:15; compare Acts 8:27-38)

Verses 16-17. The inspiration and use of Scripture

Paul referred to the sacred writings as “all scripture divinely inspired [*theópneustos*] and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correcting, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, fitted for every good work.” The distinguishing feature about the holy writings was the source of their inspiration — God. With confidence, therefore, Timothy would be able to use the sacred writings to teach others about God and Christ, to reprove any who strayed in their teaching or conduct from faithful adherence to the sacred writings, and to correct developments in the community of believers that reflected a diminishing in love for God, Christ, and fellow humans, especially fellow believers. To bring honour to God and Christ, believers needed to live upright lives, and Timothy would have been able to use the holy writings to assist fellow believers to grow in progressively coming to be more like the Son of God in disposition, word, and deed. Thus they would be trained or disciplined in righteousness or right doing and acting. (3:16)

In his beneficial use of the holy writings, Timothy would also have needed to apply the admonition to himself. This required that he personally be attentive to the teaching, reproof, correction, and discipline in righteousness that the sacred writings contained. In the case of Timothy, as a “man of God” or a man belonging to God as his servant, the sacred writings qualified him to meet all the demands of the commission that had been entrusted to him. They made him fit for “every good work,” enabling him to render needed aid, comfort, admonition, and encouragement to others. (3:17)

Notes:

The context in which the expression “last days” (3:1) is found indicates that, by mentioning the future developments, Paul wanted to stress the need for Timothy to adhere faithfully in his conduct and teaching to the truth about God and Christ that he had learned and on which his faith rested. There is no contextual basis for using Paul’s words to fit into a specific “end times” theology.

The apostle knew both Hebrew and Greek and so would have been aware of the fact that the Greek translation did not always correspond to the Hebrew text with which he was familiar. Still, although Timothy’s exposure to the sacred writings must have been through the Greek translation, the apostle could refer to him (in verse 15) as having known the holy writings from infancy. This suggests that the message, not the specific words, is the main feature of divine inspiration.

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus confirms that children were taught the sacred writings at an early age. He wrote (*Against Apion*, I, 8), “It becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.”

For the most part, there is no uncertainty about which writings the Jews considered to be sacred in the first century. The way in which Josephus grouped them, however, does leave some room for question. “For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us,” Josephus notes, “but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy], which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death.” Regarding the other books, he continues, “As to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.” (*Against Apion*, I, 8) The twelve “Minor Prophets,” as confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls, were included in one scroll and so would have been regarded as one book. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were definitely among the thirteen. Josephus elsewhere refers to Daniel as a prophet. What cannot be known for a certainty is just how he counted the historical books among the thirteen prophets. The book of Psalms is the one that contains hymns, and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes could be described as containing “precepts for the conduct of human life.” The fourth book in this category, though, is not as readily identifiable.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, portions of nearly all the books in the present Hebrew Bible have been found. No parts of the books of Nehemiah and Esther have been discovered, and there is a question as to whether one small fragment is actually from a Chronicles manuscript. On the other hand, 20 manuscripts of 1 Enoch have been found, raising the question as to whether there were Jews who regarded this book as one of the holy writings. Other books among the Dead Sea Scrolls are Sirach, the Epistle of Jeremiah, and Tobit (all three of which are included in the Roman Catholic, Greek, and Slavonic Bibles).

The Greek word for “divinely inspired” (*theópneustos*) is only found in 2 Timothy 3:16 and does not appear in the Septuagint. It is a compound of *theós* (god) and *pnéo* (blow, breathe). Whereas the context does not specifically define the sense in which the holy writings could be described as “God-breathed,” “divinely inspired,” or “inspired by God,” many have been very specific in enunciating what is meant. Possibly the words of Josephus reflect the common first-century Jewish view that only the prophets “have written the original and

earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration; and others have written what has happened in their own times.” (*Against Apion*, I, 7) This does suggest that not everything in the “sacred writings” was regarded as direct revelation, but that these writings contained trustworthy accounts, including what the prophets learned by divine inspiration.

2 Timothy 4: 1-22

4:1-4. The preached word and apostasy

Verses 1-2. The solemn charge

Paul solemnly charged Timothy before God and Christ Jesus. Stressing the seriousness of Timothy’s faithfully discharging his commission, the apostle included mention of Jesus’ role as the one “about to judge the living and the dead, and his appearing and his kingdom.” Timothy was accountable to both God and Jesus Christ, but the Father had committed all judging to his Son. This judgment would be universal, including the living and the dead, and would commence at Christ’s appearing or his returning with royal authority as King of kings and Lord of lords. Appropriately, therefore, Paul mentioned both Christ’s appearing or return and his kingdom. (4:1)

The apostle continued with the responsibilities he solemnly charged Timothy to fulfill, “Proclaim the word; attend [to it in] favourable time [and] unfavourable time; reprove, censure (*epitimáo*), encourage (*parakaléo*), in all patience and teaching.” When fulfilling his commission, Timothy would be proclaiming the “word” or message that revealed the truth about God and Christ and how acceptance of this truth should be evident in the disposition, speech, and activity of believers. Developments within the community of believers might at certain times make individuals less favourably disposed to heed the message that Timothy had been charged to proclaim. Nevertheless, whether the time was favourable or unfavourable on account of the attitude of believers, he would still be obligated to preach the message that they needed to hear. (4:2)

Whenever fellow believers strayed from living as Christ’s disciples or began to spread teaching that conflicted with what Christ taught, Timothy would have to reprove and censure them, exposing the error of their ways and insisting on corrective action. The Greek term *epitimáo* conveys the thought of expressing strong disapproval, censure, or rebuke. (4:2)

There would be times when believers were in need of encouragement or comfort. The Greek term *parakaléo* literally means to summon or call to one’s side and can signify to appeal to, urge, implore, exhort, encourage, or comfort. (4:2)

Especially when the circumstances were not favourable for proclaiming the “word,” Timothy would have to be patient, calmly bearing up under provocation. The linkage of “patience” to “teaching” may denote patience in teaching or all the patience that is required when teaching or instructing. Accordingly, the manner in which Timothy would have to reprove, censure, and encourage would be with patience or forbearance, but what he would say would have to be instructive, reflecting sound teaching. (4:2)

Verses 3-4. The reason for the charge

Paul indicated that, in the future, the situation within the community of believers would deteriorate. The time would come when they would not be amenable to “healthful teaching.” Such healthful or sound teaching would be based on the “holy writings” and Jesus’ example and instruction. A significant number within the community of believers would become intolerant of sound teaching. “According to their own desires,” they would “accumulate teachers for themselves,” teachers who would impart the novel things they wanted to hear (literally, “tickle [itch or scratch] the hearing”). Instead of being satisfied with sound teaching that served to promote growth as Christ’s disciples and wanting to be taught by those who were capable and earnestly desirous of imparting this teaching, they would choose teachers to their liking, men who would satisfy their itch to hear new, tantalizing, exciting, and speculative bits of information. (4:3)

The straying professed believers would turn away from listening to the truth, the message that rightly focused on Christ, and turn aside to “myths,” worthless and utterly false stories of human invention. (4:4)

4:5-8. The reward of the faithful preacher

Verse 5. Advise for a faithful preacher

In view of these future development, Paul urged Timothy, “You, however, be sober in everything, [be willing to] suffer evil, do the work of an evangelist, fully accomplish your service.” In view of the varying situations and circumstances he would be facing, Timothy needed to “be sober” or in full possession of his senses, manifesting reasonableness and self-restraint and avoiding rashness. Hostility toward believers among unbelievers would continue, and so he would have to be willing to endure the suffering that persecutors and opposers would inflict on him. As an evangelist, Timothy would be making known the good news about Jesus Christ and what he accomplished by sacrificing his life. Timothy’s service would include everything that he had been commissioned to do in advancing the interests of Christ, both within and outside the community of believers. (4:5)

Verses 6-7. Testimony of a faithful preacher

Commenting on his own situation as a prisoner, Paul spoke of himself as already being “poured out” like a drink offering and the time of his “releasing” as having arrived. This indicates that he expected his life to end shortly, with the releasing signifying a releasing from his mortal body by having the death sentence imposed on him. (Compare 2 Peter 1:13-15.) He felt that the process that would end in his death had already begun as if he were being poured out like a drink offering. (4:6)

Paul had “fought” the “good fight,” which included all his struggles in advancing the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ and resisting those whose defiling conduct and ruinous teaching undermined the faith of some within the community of believers. The apostle had finished the “race,” having completed his course in life as one who faithfully adhered to Christ’s example and teaching when fulfilling his commission as an apostle. Paul had held to the faith, with its focus on the Son of God and all that his Father accomplished through him. The apostle did not waver respecting his faith or trust in God and Christ. (4:7)

Verse 8. The reward of the faithful preacher

Confidently, therefore, Paul knew that the “crown of righteousness” had been reserved for him. Like a victory wreath with which one who had successfully finished the race is crowned, Paul would be crowned or granted the absolute righteousness for which he longed. The “righteous judge” would give him this righteousness as if crowning him with a victory wreath. Jesus Christ is the judge, for his Father has entrusted him with all judging authority and all of his decisions will be impartial and absolutely just. Besides Paul, all other believers who loved Christ’s appearing would receive the “crown of righteousness.” The appearing on “that day” relates to the time when Jesus Christ would return in the capacity of Judge and King of kings and Lord of lords. Those loving his appearing would be all who looked forward to the time of his return and longed to be united with him, coming to enjoy the enduring relationship with him as persons in possession of absolute righteousness in the sinless state. (4:8)

4:9-15. Personal warnings of a faithful preacher

Verses 9-13. Advise concerning fellow workers

With his death being close at hand, Paul wanted Timothy to hasten to come to him as quickly as possible. (4:9)

Demas, because he “loved the present age,” had forsaken the apostle and gone to Thessalonica. Instead of choosing to be helpful and supportive to Paul, Demas abandoned him probably because of not wanting to risk his freedom or his life.

He must have been more concerned about his own safety and welfare than about Paul, demonstrating greater love for the existing age in relation to his life than he did for an apostle and a brother in need. Crescens had left for Galatia (a Roman province in what is Turkey today), and Titus for Dalmatia (a mountainous region east of the Adriatic Sea). Paul did not explain why they had departed. The absence of any negative expression suggests that they departed with his approval or had good reason for doing so. (4:10) At the time, Luke was still with the apostle. (4:11)

Years earlier, Paul was highly displeased that Mark had not remained with him and Barnabas after leaving Cyprus and continuing to declare the good news about Christ in Asia Minor. Later, this caused a rift between Barnabas and Paul, with Barnabas choosing to work with his cousin Mark and Paul deciding to have Silas as his companion. (Acts 12:25; 13:13, 14; 15:37-41) When the apostle wrote to Timothy, his relationship to Mark had changed. He requested that Timothy have Mark join him in coming to see him, adding, “for he is useful to me in service.” This indicates that Paul had come to regard Mark highly as a fellow worker. (4:11)

The apostle had sent Tychicus to Ephesus. (4:12) Earlier, Tychicus, one of Paul’s beloved fellow workers from the Roman province of Asia, accompanied him in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. (Acts 20:2-4) During his first imprisonment in Rome, the apostle entrusted Tychicus with letters for the community of believers in Ephesus and in Colossae. At that time, Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave who had become a believer, accompanied Tychicus to rejoin Philemon as a brother in Christ. (Ephesians 6:21, 22; Colossians 4:7-9)

Sometime prior to his arrest, Paul seems to have stayed in the home of Carpus in Troas, on the northwest coast of Asia Minor, and appears to have departed during a time of warm weather. He left his cloak with Carpus and, therefore, asked Timothy to bring it with him. Additionally, he wanted to have his scrolls and particularly his parchments. The scrolls may have been either Hebrew or Greek manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures. Among these scrolls, some may have been made from parchment or animal skins, with the others being papyrus scrolls. Another possibility is that the parchments may have included copies of the apostle’s own letters to congregations and other then-existing Christian writings. With winter approaching (4:21), Paul would have wanted his cloak for warmth, and having the scrolls and parchments to read would have comforted him in his state of confinement. (4:13)

Verses 14-15. Warnings concerning evil workers

The apostle had suffered much harm from the metalworker Alexander. He did not doubt, however, that the Lord Jesus Christ, God's appointed judge to whom all must render an account, would repay Alexander according to his deeds. (4:14)

Paul warned Timothy to be on guard against him, for this metalworker had resisted his words. Alexander must have been defiant, doing whatever he could to undermine Paul's labours or to hinder him from carrying out his commission as an apostle. (4:15)

4:16-18. Testimony of the Lord's faithfulness

Verse 16. Man's unfaithfulness

When making his first defence as a prisoner, everyone who could have been of assistance to Paul abandoned him. He, though, did not reflect a spirit of bitterness or ill will toward any of them, but said, "May it not be reckoned against them." (4:16)

Whereas humans forsook him, the Lord Jesus Christ stood by him. Paul sensed within himself the Lord's strengthening so that, through him, the proclamation of God's message might be fully made and that "all the nations might hear [it]." In making his defence before the highest authority in the Roman Empire, Paul, as he had before other rulers, would have proclaimed God's message as it related to Jesus Christ. (Compare Acts 24:10-21; 26:1-29.) What the apostle then said in his defence would have become widely known, resulting in people of "all nations" hearing what he had proclaimed. Subsequent to his first defense, Paul was rescued "from the lion's mouth." In this case, his being delivered from the "lion's mouth" may signify his escaping from mortal peril instead of his not being thrown to lions in the arena. (4:17; compare Psalm 22:21; 35:17; 57:4.)

Paul did not doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ would continue to rescue him from everything harmful and save him "for his heavenly kingdom." This did not mean that the apostle believed that he would be delivered from all suffering or from being condemned to death, for he had endured many hardships and difficulties. But, as in the past, he would not be harmed by any evil attacks against him but would be strengthened and sustained in remaining faithful to his Lord, assuring that he would have a permanent place with him in the heavenly realm. This is the realm where Jesus Christ is recognized as King of kings and Lord of lords by his Father's appointment. The Son of God is, therefore, in possession of surpassing glory, splendour, or magnificence. Appropriately, Paul made the

prayerful expression, “To him [be] the glory forever and ever [literally, ‘into the ages of the ages’]. Amen [so be it].” (4:18)

4:19-22. Greetings and closing salutation

Verses 19-21. Greetings

The apostle then requested Timothy to extend greetings to Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. (4:19)

In view of the earlier reference to the service Onesiphorus had rendered in Ephesus, his household and Prisca and Aquila must have been in Ephesus at the time. (1:16-18) Paul had first met Prisca and Aquila in Corinth and worked with them in the tent making trade. Later, they accompanied him to Ephesus, where they remained after Paul traveled back to Jerusalem. (Acts 18:1-3, 18-23) For a time, they returned to Rome (Romans 16:3-5) and, from there, appear to have come back to Ephesus. Some have thought that Paul mentioned Prisca first because of her having a higher social standing in the Greco-Roman world than did her husband. It seems more likely, however, that the apostle mentioned her first because she excelled her husband in being able to explain the message about Christ to others and in taking the initiative to assist fellow believers. This possible reason seems to be more in keeping with the lesser value Paul placed on position or status. (Compare Galatians 2:6.)

The Erastus who remained in the city of Corinth may be the one with whom Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia some years earlier. (Acts 19:22) Trophimus, a believer from the city of Ephesus, accompanied Paul on the trip to Jerusalem with a contribution for needy believers there. While in Jerusalem, Paul was falsely accused of having brought Trophimus beyond the Court of the Gentiles, which accusation was a contributory factor in the apostle’s being mobbed and coming to be a prisoner under Roman authority. (Acts 20:3-5, 17, 22; 21:26-30; 24:6) It appears that after Paul’s release from his first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16-31), Trophimus again accompanied him but became ill, making it impossible for him to continue laboring with the apostle in advancing the interests of Christ. Paul then continued on his way, leaving the ill Trophimus in Miletus, likely with fellow believers who could look after him. (4:20)

After requesting Timothy to do his utmost to join him before winter, the apostle conveyed the greetings of Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, “and all the brothers,” or all other fellow believers with whom he then had association. (4:21)

Verse 22. Closing salutation

The apostle concluded with the prayerful expression that the Lord Jesus Christ be with Timothy's spirit, followed by the words, "The favor [be] with you." Timothy's "spirit" would be his disposition as a believer devoted to Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ would be with his spirit, supporting him and strengthening him in his godly desire to be faithful in fulfilling the commission that had been entrusted to him. (4:22)

"Amen" (so be it) is the last word in numerous manuscripts, whereas other manuscripts end the letter with the plural "you." This would seem to indicate that what Paul had written was to be shared with fellow believers, for other believers besides Timothy are included in the apostle's prayer, "The favor [be] with you." All believers are fellow sharers in gracious favor or unmerited kindness, which includes the guidance and aid which God and Christ provide. (4:22; see the Notes section.)

Notes:

In verse 1, numerous manuscripts read "according to his appearing" (not "and his appearing").

In connection with suffering (verse 5), fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus adds, "as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

After "Lord" (in verse 22), many manuscripts add either "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ."

Questionnaire 2 Timothy

(Another way of questioning)

2 Timothy 1

1. How often did Paul pray for Timothy? (3)
2. What was said about Timothy's grandmother and mother? (5)
3. How was the gift of God imparted to Timothy? (6)
4. What spirit has God given us? (7)
5. What indicates that Paul was in prison when he wrote this epistle?
(8,12,16: 2:9,4:6)
6. Why did God save and call Paul and Timothy? (9-11)

7. Who did Paul know and of what was he persuaded? (12)
8. What was Timothy to hold fast? (13-14)
9. Who turned away from Paul? (15)
10. What was said about Onesiphorus? (16-18)

2 Timothy 2

1. How was Timothy to be strong? (1)
2. What was Timothy to do with the things he had heard from Paul? (2)
3. How are we to endure hardness? (3)
4. With what must not a soldier entangle himself? (4)
5. Who must a soldier please? (4)
6. Who must first be partaker of the crops? (6)
7. What is not bound? (9)
8. What faithful saying is given? (11-13)
9. What should we do to be approved unto God? (15)
10. What should we shun and avoid? (16,23)
11. Whose words spread like cancer? (17-18)
12. What should those who name the name of Christ do? (19)
13. What should we flee? (22)
14. What should we pursue? (22)
15. What should the servant of the Lord do? (24-26)

2 Timothy 3

1. What did Paul prophesy would come in the last days? (1)
2. What will be the characteristics of men in the last days? (2-7)
3. To what Old Testament characters does Paul liken these men? (8-9)
4. What had Timothy carefully followed? (10-11)
5. What will all that desire to live godly encounter? (12)

6. What is said about evil men? (13)
7. How long had Timothy known the Scriptures? (14-15)
8. What is the origin of all Scripture? (16)
9. For what is the Scripture profitable? (16-17)

2 Timothy 4

1. What did Paul charge Timothy to do? (1-2)
2. What won't many in the last days want to hear? (3-4)
3. What work did Paul ask Timothy to do? (5)
4. What did Paul say regarding his fight and race? (6-7)
5. What reward awaited Paul and all those who love the Lord's appearing?
(8)
6. Why did Paul say Demas had forsaken him? (10)
7. Who did Paul say was with him at the time of this writing? (11)
8. Who did Paul want Timothy to bring with him? (11)
9. What did Paul want Timothy to bring to him? (13)
10. Who did Paul much harm? (14-15)
11. Who stood with Paul, strengthened him and delivered him? (16-18)
12. To whom did Paul send greetings? (19)
13. Who did Paul leave sick at Miletus? (20)
14. When did Paul want Timothy to come? (21)

Advance questions on 2 Timothy

1. What influence can godly parents and grandparents have on a person?
2. How can you be eternally secure?
3. How can you be a "refreshing saint"?
4. How does a soldier learn to endure hardness?

5. How important is it for you to be with those who have a pure heart?
6. What is a form of godliness with out power?
7. What persecution have you encountered?
8. How has the Scripture benefited you?
9. What do you think “in season and out of season” means?
10. What would you like to say as final words before you die?
11. Who do you know that has quit following the Lord because they loved this present world?
12. What do you think of Paul asking for John Mark?

What is the world coming to?

II Timothy 3:1-9

What is this world coming to? Often that question is given rhetorically as a response to some news item we hear or read. Not long ago I spoke with a pastor friend who lives in Rouen (France). One of the first things out of his mouth was an apology for the decision to allow same sex marriages in France. We might consider that and say, 'What is this world coming to?'

Well, let me answer that tonight. It is coming to an END! No. That isn't a joke or a smart aleck answer; it is the truth according to God's Word! Even the secularists have fearful expectations. People who have no allegiance to the Scripture realize the potential for the end of the world, as we know it. The increasing escalation of war in the Middle East, nuclear attacks or accidents, energy crises, ecological disasters, killer viruses, earthquakes, droughts, terrorist attacks, or the effects of global warming all have people thinking about the end of the world. But as believers in Jesus Christ, we do not have to fear.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

- We know that everything is under the control of our sovereign God.
- We know that the Bible gives us many facts about future events.
- We call these facts prophecy or the study of eschatology
- Did you know that the Bible deals more with prophecy than any other single subject - that fully one-fourth of the Bible is prophetic?
- Each of its 66 books contains at least some references to prophecy.
- Some like Daniel and Revelation are purely prophetic.
- So, our biblical education would be incomplete without some knowledge of prophecy.

Before we get very far into this study, it is important that we note a few dangers to avoid when studying prophecy.

I. Setting Dates and Making Predictions.

A. Not long ago people were predicting all sorts of things on the eve of 2000.

2 Peter 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

1. Some were declaring that Jesus would return, it sounded exciting, and it almost made sense.

2. 4000 years from Adam - Jesus

3. 2000 years since Jesus

4. 1000 years for the millennial reign

5. So it must be true!

6. Jesus is coming back sometime in the 20th century.

7. There is only one problem with that kind of thinking...it was wrong!

B. Jesus made it very clear that the time of His return rests with God and God alone.

Mr 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

1. Men have often tried to date His return.

2. Some believed WWI was the end. Others proclaimed Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin as the antichrist.

3. Hal Lindsey said the end would come within a generation or 40 years of the return of Israel to Palestine in 1948.

4. Edgar Whisenant² wrote a widely distributed booklet called *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*.

² **Edgar C. Whisenant** (September 25, 1932 – May 16, 2001), was a former NASA engineer and Bible student who predicted the Rapture would occur in 1988, sometime between Sept. 11 and Sept. 13. He published two books about this, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* and *On Borrowed Time*. Eventually, 300,000 copies of *88 Reasons* were mailed free of charge to ministers across America, and 4.5 million copies were sold in bookstores and elsewhere. Whisenant was quoted as saying "Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong; and I

II. Interpreting Scripture in light of Headlines.

A. Have you seen the news style TV shows of self-proclaimed prophecy experts?

1. They try to fit every major news story to a verse of Scripture.
2. While a student I was certain that the European common market was the revived Roman Empire.
3. As and as soon as the 10th country was added it would signal the end. [The ten toes of the great image of Daniel and the dreadful and terrible ten-horned beast of Daniel 10]
4. But now there are more than 10 and so it doesn't make sense.
5. I remember discussing the prophetic implication of the break up of the Soviet Union and the removal of the 'iron curtain'.
6. Russia is no longer a great power in the world, so it doesn't make sense prophetically.

B. The point is that we cannot allow ourselves to interpret Scripture in light of the headlines.

1. It should be the other way around.
2. We should be interpreting the headlines in light of Scripture.
3. We need to have an understanding the signs of the times.

2 Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

III. Trying to Answer Unanswerable Questions.

A. We just don't have the answers to all the questions.

1. Prophecy is enveloped in mystery.

say that to every preacher in town" and "[I]f there were a king in this country and I could gamble with my life, I would stake my life on Rosh Hashana 88."

2. If you have a question, write it down, or email me, and I'll try to answer it.
3. However, be prepared for me responding with, 'I just don't know'.
4. There are some things that we will just have to wait until we get to heaven to figure out.
5. I think that most of them will probably not be all that important then anyway.

Ac 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

B. It is not for you to know...

1. We may not like that, but there are things that the Lord chose NOT to reveal to us!
2. He wants us to live by faith, not by sight
3. And that means we must trust Him when we don't understand or know all of the answers.

IV. Ignoring the Practical Application of Scripture.

A. Perhaps the greatest danger in the study of prophecy is this.

1. We get so excited about what will happen tomorrow that we fail to live for Jesus today.
2. There is much interest in what will take place in the future...but our focus needs to be on the here and now.
3. We need to live for God today in light of our understanding of prophecy!
4. When we understand that the coming of Christ is nearing...we should also understand that our time to serve Him is coming to a close.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Romans 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Ephesians 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

B. Prophetic studies should do more than just stimulate us intellectually.

1. They should wake us up to the reality that we don't have forever...
2. What we do for Christ must be done quickly, before He comes!
3. Sometimes we spend too much time debating points of prophecy instead of declaring the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
4. No is saved because of their position on a particular point of prophecy...salvation is only available to those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!
5. Let's not lose sight of what is truly important...Jesus is coming soon.
6. We must share that truth with others that we might see them come to Him in faith.

There are some real dangers for us as we begin to study prophecy. We need to be aware of them and avoid them. As we study about the future of this world let us consider ourselves and our ministries. Let's not allow ourselves to become so caught up in coming events that we forget about our responsibility to those around us. Jesus is coming again, and that thought should bring an urgency to our minds concerning the need of those who are without Him. It is exciting to think of all the wonderful things that await the faithful child of God, but it is also sobering to realize what awaits those who have never trusted Him as Savior. What is this world coming to? It is coming to an END, and what we do for the Lord we must do quickly. The eternal destiny of souls are in the balance!

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Looking unto Jesus

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Ghent, Belgium Superintendant Rev. Philippe L. De Coster, B.Th., D.D.,
Ghent, Belgium.

[Contact](#)